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VOL. 2898.

**IN THE SERVICE OF RACHEL LADY RUSSELL.**

BY

**EMMA MARSHALL.**

IN ONE VOLUME.

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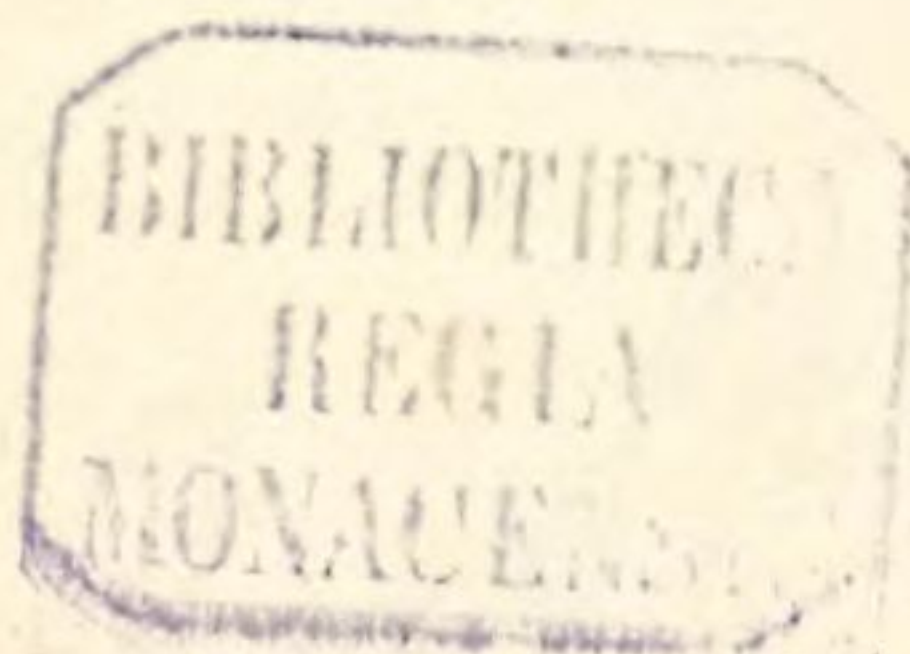
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IN THE SERVICE  
OF  
RACHEL LADY RUSSELL

A STORY

BY

EMMA MARSHALL,

AUTHOR OF

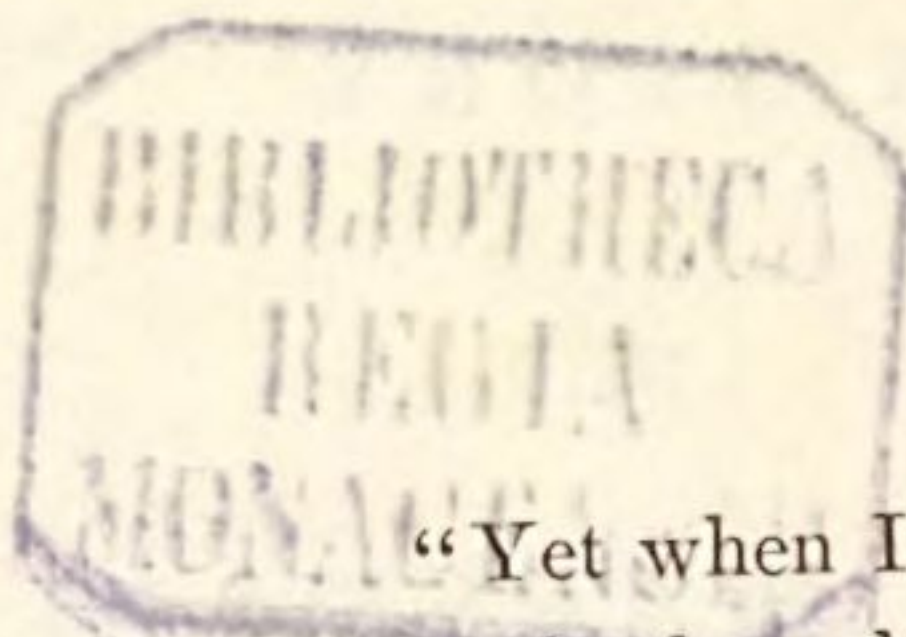
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LEIPZIG  
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1893.





“Yet when I approach  
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems,  
And in herself complete; so well to know  
Her own, that what she wills to do or say  
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.”

MILTON.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE historical facts in this story are gathered chiefly from Burnet's *History of His Own Time*, *The Life of Archbishop Tillotson*, published with the complete edition of his Sermons in 1752, *The Life of William Lord Russell*, by Lord John Russell, and Mr. Cave Browne's *Lambeth Palace and its Associations*, published in 1882.

The scenes in the home life of Rachel Lady Russell, at Stratton and Southampton House, are taken from her *Letters*, published in 1832. In these letters, her children are often lovingly mentioned; and the picture of her happiness, as a devoted wife and tender mother, is drawn by her own hand in glowing colours.

These scenes are woven into this story—as they afford a touching contrast to others which followed them, when the husband whom Lady Russell so passionately loved, and by whom she stood with noble



steadfastness in his hour of trial, was taken from her by a cruel death, in the very prime of his manhood.

It is hardly necessary to say that the De Massué family, and others connected with it, in the course of the narrative, are wholly imaginary characters.

WOODSIDE, LEIGH WOODS,  
CLIFTON, *5th October 1892.*



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"FOR good example is an unspeakable benefit to mankind, and hath a secret power and influence upon those with whom we converse, to form them into the same dispositions and manners.

"It is a living rule that teacheth men without trouble, and lets them see their faults without open reproof and upbraiding. Besides that, it adds great weight to a man's counsel and persuasion, when we see he advises nothing but what he does; nor exacts anything from others from which he desires to be necessarily excused."

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON.



# IN THE SERVICE OF RACHEL LADY RUSSELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AT CANTERBURY.

1682. The driver of the stage waggon from Dover had, after a long and toilsome journey, drawn up his jaded horses before the Chequers Inn in the High Street of Canterbury.

A knot of people generally collected, to watch the weary passengers descend from the waggon, to hear news, to look out for letters, and to question the driver of the cumbrous vehicle, and the guard who occupied a seat at the back, what luck they had had on the road.

For what with deep ruts and obstructions of various kinds, and the fear of falling in with ill-disposed persons, who not unfrequently lay in wait for conveyances, public and private, to rifle the passengers' baggage and commit other depredations, this journey from Dover was often by no means an easy or a pleasant one.



One by one the passengers were helped out by the hostlers of the Chequers, and the little fat fussy host of that celebrated inn, with his tall gaunt wife at his elbow, stood ready to receive any of the travellers who might wish for clean beds, good fare, and a night's rest.

"There's a gentlewoman inside," the guard said, "who is in a swoon, and she'll be like to want a physician, Mistress Bunce, or I'm mistaken; you'd better come here."

He had scarcely finished this invitation to Mistress Bunce, the tall landlady of the Chequers, when a young man sprang down the steps of the waggon and said:

"Can we have beds here to-night? The lady, my mother, is suffering from the baleful effects of the rough weather in the Channel."

"At your service, sir," the landlady said. "As good beds as any in the kingdom, and good fare to boot."

"There, that is enough. Help my sister to descend, and I will lift my mother down, if you will guide me to a good bed-chamber."

"Oh! Louis, Louis!" cried a young voice from the depths of the waggon, "hasten, I pray you! She is coming to, but she is half suffocated in this dreadful coach."

"Hasten, then, to get out, Clarice. I cannot raise our mother in my arms till you make room."

A young girl of eighteen or twenty now jumped from the high step, and another voice said:

"She is better, Louis. Oh, I thought she was dead. Mother, mother!"

"Get down, Clémence, and stand below to receive her when I carry her out."



"Louis, my dear son, I wish I had died. Why bring me back to life?"

"Now, mother, this is no time for parley," Louis said firmly. "Come, we will soon have you in a good bed."

"The sea! the terrible sea!" the poor lady moaned. "Oh, Louis, Louis! why did you make me cross the sea—better to die—better to die!"

Louis wisely took no further notice of these feeble lamentations, but raised his mother, who was lying prostrate amongst the straw at the bottom of the waggon, and descended carefully, while the sister he called Clémence put her arms round her mother and supported her into the inn.

"Dear heart!" exclaimed Mistress Bunce. "She looks as white as a ghost. Mayhap she has the plague, or the sweating sickness, or some disease, and then woe betide us, Bunce, if we take in these strange folk."

"My mother's ailment is naught that is catching," Clarice said. "Do not be afraid, madame, but please show us our chamber. It is sickness brought on by the fearsome storm we met in the Channel—nothing more."

"Well, well, I'll despatch a messenger for a surgeon who lives in Saint Margaret's Street, and, good sir," she called in a shrill voice, "I cannot suffer you to haul in the baggage till Master Trotman gives me his word it is safe."

"Safe!" exclaimed Louis; "what do you mean? Do you take me for a cheat or a scoundrel? I will pay your just reckoning," he said proudly, "as befits Louis de Massué of the noble race of Ruvigny. Make no



more ado, but take madame to your best guest-chamber and provide her with a hot posset without further parley."

"Hoighty-toighty, I see daylight now!" Mistress Bunce exclaimed. "I could not for the life of me think what made you all speak as if you had pease pudding in your mouths, mincing and mowing."

"Come now, Charity," said Master Bunce, "no more of this, or" (in an aside) "we'll lose good company." Then to Louis he said: "This hostel and all it provides for man and beast is mine, though from her tongue you might well think it was yonder good woman's. But she spends her spleen in words, and at bottom is a good soul, and a good housewife."

Mistress Bunce was leading the way to the broad oak stairs which led to the gallery round which the bed-chambers were situated.

"You talk mighty grand, Bunce," she said, shooting a Parthian arrow as she departed; "but if ever there was a man a coward about the plague or any sickness, it's you. Why, you cry if your tooth aches, and had to be held down while Master Trotman pulled out one t'other day."

Master Bunce tried to laugh scornfully, but it was but a poor attempt, and he looked abashed and mortified, to have his weaknesses thus laid bare by his wife.

Louis de Massué still stood by the baggage in the entry, while his sisters attended their mother upstairs.

"Perhaps," he said, "it may be as well to summon this surgeon, not because there is any fear for you in the matter of the plague, but my mother's condition is such that physic may be useful."



"I will despatch a servant at once, sir, and you will please to order what supper you may desire—roast capon, a good meat pasty, a sirloin of beef, a stuffed duck, a—"

"Hold, I pray you," Louis said, laughing, as this hearty English fare was offered for consideration. "My sisters and I have not the stomach of giants. The roast capon will suffice, with a pint of light wine, Canary, if it please you."

"And good strong ale, of the October brew, for you, sir?"

"No, no, your strong ale is too much for my head. I drink wine by preference. And add to the capon some conserve of fruit served with cream, and the supper will be fit for a prince."

"And a prince he looks," Master Bunce said, following Louis with admiring eyes as he passed out of the open court, round which the house was built, supported by pillars forming a colonnade where, in days long long before this June evening of 1682, the poorer pilgrims to the shrine in the Cathedral were wont to congregate, hoping for alms from their richer brethren who could afford to pay for accommodation in the suite of chambers above.

Louis de Massué was tall and slightly built. He had inherited from his mother, who was of English descent, a fair complexion and hair which had the ruddy glow of her Saxon ancestors. But his eyes were hazel, and the dark pencilled eyebrows above them were, with the rather pointed contour of his face, more decidedly French. He wore the usual dress of the young gentleman of his time—a short cloak lined with blue satin



was tossed over his shoulder, his ruffles were lace, and his abundant hair fell in curls over a deep collar of the finest linen, edged with lace like the ruffles. Louis was sensitive and quick to take offence—a little too ready to lay his hand upon the short sword he wore at his belt—and extremely jealous that his descent from a noble French house should not be overlooked. His mother, on the contrary, was equally anxious to assert her English origin, and she had obstinately refused to speak the language of her husband's country, and clung pertinaciously to the belief that Protestant doctrine belonged to the English, and that, though there were some instances to the contrary, the French were Papists in tastes and feelings.

It had been to satisfy his mother that Louis had yielded to her entreaties at his father's death to take her and his two young sisters to England. What was the benefit, she urged, of his belonging to the noble house of Ruvigny, if he did not make use of it by the letter attesting his relationship which the Marquis de Ruvigny had given him? He had thought it well to obtain for himself and his children letters of naturalisation in England, and they had been sent to the safe keeping of his niece, Lady Russell. The Marquis had given Louis to understand that the tie of kinship was not so close as to warrant his attempting to include him and his sisters in these letters; but he bade him seek out some of his mother's English kindred, and what with their influence and his own connection, though distant, with Lady Russell's family, he thought the settlement in England might be well undertaken.

Louis's proud spirit had chafed under what every-



one feels to be galling—the patronage of a relation. It is much easier to accept help from those with whom there is no tie of blood, than from those who are a little unwilling to acknowledge that the tie exists. Louis de Massué was undoubtedly on the watch for the slights and indignities which, as he conceived, the head of his house was disposed to put upon him, and no one ever looked out for slights and failed to find them! Louis, as he stood by the door of the Chequers Inn, with the old Church of St. Mary Bredman's opposite, was telling himself he had better have let his mother and sisters remain in Picardy, and gone alone to England to feel his way, before removing the whole family across the Channel. Everything had been against him from the first start—the stormy waves, so familiar to all who cross “the silver streak” which divides us from France, had beaten about the small packet in which they had sailed. Deadly sea-sickness had laid his mother prostrate, and she had been for some time previously in an ailing, hysterical condition, requiring much patience and forbearance from her children, of which it is only fair to say, they gave her a full measure.

Louis's meditations were interrupted by the arrival of the surgeon, who, bustling and self-important, said:

“Stand aside, young sir; I am summoned to a lady lying at the point of death.”

“I hope not, sir,” Louis said haughtily. “The lady in question is my mother, Madame de Massué, and is suffering from fatigue and prolonged sea-sickness. I believe you are the surgeon for whom my good host sent a messenger.”



"I am Dr. Trotman, sir, and will beg you to conduct me to the lady without further parley, or loss of time; for my presence, sir, is required soon by no less a personage than his reverence the Dean."

"It is necessary to show I am not to be treated as a nonentity," Dr. Trotman said to himself. "This young popinjay is French, and brimful of his own importance, that is very clear."

Louis returned to the quadrangle and went into the entry where his baggage still lay in a large pile. Master Bunce came hurrying out to receive the doctor, calling sharply to his wife to lead him to the lady's chamber.

"And leave the capon to burn, and the sauce to get smoked? No! And as to the sick lady, it's megrims that ails her."

Poor Mr. Bunce, anxious that no more of his wife's uncomplimentary remarks should reach Louis's ears, was about to summon a serving-maid from the bar and order her to conduct the doctor to madame's chamber, when a pretty, sparkling face peeped over the balustrade of the staircase, and a voice said:

"Louis, is that the doctor? Bring him up, please."

Louis reached the place with two strides, and said:

"Come up, sir. My sister will conduct us to my mother's chamber."

"She is crying piteously, Louis," Clarice said, "and vows she never wished to come to England, and I am cross-grained to her and that does no good. Poor little mother! I do pity her."

"Follow my sister, sir," Louis said, "and I will await your opinion here."



Louis leaned against one of the wooden pillars which surrounded the gallery where he stood, near the door where Clarice and the doctor disappeared.

"The Dean? Yes," he thought, "I remember that the great man mentioned the Dean of Canterbury—with an impossible name—as a good friend of Lady Russell."

Then Louis took from the deep pocket of his coat a case clasped with silver, and fitting a small key to its lock he examined some papers in it.

"Yes," he said, "I thought as much."

Written in pencil on the cover of one of the introductory letters were the words: "Si vous restez à Canterbury, cherchez M. Tillotson; il a beaucoup d'amitié pour Madame ma nièce. Ses conseils vous seront bien utiles si vous les prenez de bonne part."

"If I take them in good part—that depends on what they may be. Mon Dieu! We say, *c'est le premier pas qui coûte*. This first step has been bad enough, and as far as I see the next may be worse. So much money gone for this venture—so much harm from that voyage, tossing about on those cross currents for two days, unable to make the harbour. But it is done now, and I can never get her back to France, poor mother! Clarice has spirit enough for all three, and with her help we may do better than I now fear. As soon as our supper is eaten I will make a visit to the Dean—this Solomon whose counsels I am to follow."

The doctor succeeded in calming his patient. He let a little blood from her arm, said he would send a sleeping potion, and call again the next day. Letting blood was the panacea for all ills in the seventeenth



century, and Dr. Trotman, highly satisfied with the result of his visit, and the happy certainty of retaining his patient for at least a week under his care, went gaily away to answer a summons to the Deanery, which had arrived almost at the same time as Master Bunce's of the Chequers Inn.

Madame de Massué was decidedly quieted by the treatment she had received; that is to say, she was too weak to make any resistance to her daughters' decision, that she must lie in bed and not think of anything till she had had a good night. When once safely established in the large four-post bed, with its carved devices at the footboard, and its pillars surmounted with griffins' and dragons' heads, from which thick tapestry hangings—the delight of Mistress Bunce's heart—drooped in dusty festoons, Madame de Massué swallowed the sleeping potion, and, with no more complaints or tears, resigned herself to the inevitable, and fell fast asleep.

The two sisters then went down to the parlour below, where they found Louis awaiting them, ready to attack the roast capon, served with slices of smoked ham, with a hearty appetite. Mistress Bunce waited on her guests with a very heated face. She was anxious to be particularly civil, remembering that at first her manners had not been very engaging. She foresaw that her guests might be profitable, and that they were "quality," though "French quality." Still, there was no fear that her score would not be paid.

"I hope you find everything to your mind, sir," she began, after filling a large grace-cup with her best canary. "The capon is of my own rearing, and the



bacon from my own pig; no ill-fed pork is seen on my table. I am up with the sun and at my garden hard by, when many are lazying in their beds. Bunce is a sad lie-abed, and leaves the hard work to me."

"That is very unkind," Clémence said, for Louis made no rejoinder to any of Mistress Bunce's remarks, and seemed quite unconscious of her presence.

"No, no, Bunce is not unkind—he is only like all men, as you'll find fast enough when you take some fine beau to your husband. Men are queer creatures at the best."

"That woman's tongue," Louis murmured. Then aloud, "We have all we need, madame; we do not desire to retain you. You must have other guests requiring your presence, for I hear voices as of newcomers."

Mistress Bunce felt offended, but Louis's manner was courtly, and he called her "madame."

"I do not make myself cheap to any guests which are not real quality," she said, "but I have much to see to."

At this moment Bunce was heard calling his wife, and she swept out of the little parlour, shutting the door with a very significant bang. Clarice laughed merrily.

"Oh, fie, Louis! You are ungracious. I thought it fine pastime to hear Mistress Bunce chatter about her capon and pigs."

"I am in no mood for such folly. I did not know Englishwomen could be so garrulous. But hearken, my sisters, we must decide what is best to do—and to this end I shall pay my respects to the Dean, to whom



my most noble kinsman condescends to commend me. I shall lose no time; it is scarce seven o'clock, and while you tend our mother I will find my way to the Cathedral, for doubtless the Dean lives under its shadow."

"May I come also?" Clarice asked. "Oh, permit me, Louis, dear Louis."

"I do not think you should accompany me to the Dean, if he grants me an interview; but you may walk thither with me while I ascertain the Dean's pleasure."

Clarice was starting up to fetch her black lace hood, when Clémence said,—

"We ought to be sorting our things. The baggage has been carried up, and I am sure we present no attractive appearance in these sea-stained gowns. Yours has a large rent in it, Clarice."

"Has it? How did it happen—Ah! I remember. It caught on a nail in that dreadful waggon. But my lace mantle hides all. Let me accompany you, Louis."

"No, you had best remain with Clémence, child, and do her bidding."

"I am not Clémence's servant!" and Clarice pouted. "We should have brought a proper serving-maid with us, as I told you."

"And as I told you there is not too much money to spare. Our purse will be empty when we reach London, as it is."

"Oh, I am sick of hearing of money!" Clarice said, "I want so many things that money gives. Why—why are we poor?"

"Do not be childish, Clarice," Clémence said re-



provingly. And then in a lower key: "Do you not see Louis is troubled. Let us go back to our mother and get our own bed-chamber ready. I shall be glad, I know, to lie down and sleep. I am much fatigued."

"I am not," Clarice said. "I hate that dull, dark chamber where we are to sleep. I saw a mouse scuttle across the floor, and a rat will come next. Oh! I do not love England. How is it our mother has talked of England as Paradise? It is no Paradise to me. I shall speak no more English, and I vow I cannot understand half of what these folk say. It may be English, but it has a very ugly sound."

"It seems our English has an ugly sound to Mistress Bunce," Louis said. "Remember our proverb, Clarice—*Chacun à son goût*."

"Ah, mon frère, mais mon goût est parfait et le goût de Madame Bunce—Bunce! quel nom!—est détestable. Voyez-vous?"

Louis stooped and kissed his young sister's forehead, and then said: "Bon soir, bon soir. Go to your beds and dream. I shall not see you again till to-morrow morning, when I may have a plan to propound."

Clémence and Clarice de Massué were, like many sisters, very dissimilar in appearance and taste. Clémence was somewhat grave and slow to receive impressions. She was English in her reserve, and was never in any haste to care for new things or new people. The childhood of both girls had been passed in retirement in the old ruined château, which was the inheritance of the younger branch of the Ruvigny family. Monsieur de Massué was a staunch Protestant, and had, from broken health and broken fortunes, seldom left his house or



desired any to visit him in his retreat. Louis had, like all gentlemen of his time, gone forth into the world at a very early age, and was attached to the suite of one of Louis XIV.'s courtiers. But the hollowness of that luxurious society, and the flattery which was the surest way to success in it, were entirely repugnant to Louis de Massué's sense of what was manly and right. Louis was no smooth-tongued courtier, and though his handsome person and ancient race gained for him a certain amount of favour, his strong religious bias, and his moral rectitude, did not win him the good will of those to whom self-indulgence and self-advancement were the rule of life.

On the death of his father, Louis returned to the Château, hoping to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the family. But things were too far gone to render this possible, and he yielded to his mother's entreaties, and winding up his father's affairs with great difficulty, he realised what could be saved from the wreck, and came to his mother's native country to seek his fortune, with his two young sisters, Clarice and Clémence. There were other reasons which made this departure desirable. There were signs of the approaching storm which resulted in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, three years later, when the French Protestants were driven from their homes and their country by the will of a despotic sovereign. The Marquis de Ruvigny, who was a faithful servant of the king, was not blind to the growing intolerance of the Court, and was preparing for his retirement to England whenever the blow should fall. His advice to his young kinsman was to depart while there was yet no actual danger, and find out



friends amongst his mother's connections in her own country.

Madame de Massué had married when she was very young. She was the daughter of a London goldsmith and clock-maker, who died early in life and left his children orphans, for Madame de Massué's mother had died at her birth. Her brother was too young to take any charge of her. Monsieur de Massué met her in a small meeting-house in London. He had come over to exchange devotional experiences with one of the leaders of the Separatists, and to seek spiritual edification. The young girl, who sat with a rapt expression of devotion in her blue eyes, just below the pulpit, fascinated the susceptible Frenchman. He inquired her position, heard that she was an orphan and penniless, living on the charity of a distant relation, her brother having been put to his father's business under the man who succeeded him, and being entirely dependent on him for his living. Assuring himself that the gentle blue-eyed girl was converted to God, and held the particular form of doctrine which he believed to be the only true Faith, Monsieur de Massué married Alice Jenkyns, and took her, scarcely more than a child-bride, to the old château in Picardy where she had lived up to this time.

Madame de Massué had always been fairly subservient to her husband's will, and true to her early profession of faith. But when he was taken from her, and rumours of persecution were in the air, and Protestants were threatened with loss of all things if they still held to their doctrine, Madame de Massué's heart failed her. England would be a safe place of refuge, England was her own country; it might be she should



find her brother there. She had never heard from or of him, but he might be a rich man now—a civic dignitary, wealthy and prosperous. She had never really loved France, and she had insisted on her children speaking English more frequently than French. She always addressed them in her own tongue, but Clémence, who was devoted to her father, would speak to him in the language he loved best, and in which he offered up morning and night—yes, and at midday also—French prayers which, like those of the English Separatists, were often exhortations and expostulations rather than prayer. Many a time Clémence had felt sore at heart when she heard her mother disparage all that was French and exalt all that was English. Many a time had she gone to the little chamber in the old château where her father, renouncing the world, held communion with God, and taking the Bible or some other religious book, she would read to him with the pure French accent that he loved to hear, and looking up at him would say:

“Moi, j’aime la langue de France, mon père, est-ce que je lis bien?”

Then her father would gather her to his breast and answer:

“Ah, oui, ma chérie, tu n’oublies pas que tu es une vraie fille de mon pays.”

Louis and his father had not much in common. Louis had almost a morbid dread of professing more than he felt, and although a Protestant to his heart’s core, he never could bring himself to speak in the old hall of the château where the faithful few of that remote district, not far from the sea in Picardy, gathered con-



tinually for the breaking of bread and prayer and reading of the Bible. Simple folk, for the most part, were they, but now and again a dark-eyed stranger, with a somewhat sinister expression of countenance, would sit amongst them, sent as a spy to report on the proceedings to the priests of the district.

"It would be well to be cautious in denunciation of the Mass and the Confessional, my father," Louis said on one occasion when he had been present at a meeting, and had watched the face of a man at the further end of the hall.

"Nay, my son, I know no caution where the glory of God is concerned. I despise time-serving and abhor priest-craft, and I will ever hold my testimony against it."

"Your life is a testimony against it, my father—your manners and bearing are full of gentleness and meekness, till you touch these vexed questions; and if as I hear at Court, the Protestants will soon be driven from the land and done to death if they make resistance—well—"

"I would suffer death gladly, my son, I would die for the truth. I pray constantly that my wife and children may be kept steadfast."

But Monsieur de Massué was not called upon to suffer for the truth's sake. His burning zeal consumed him, and he declined by slow but sure degrees, dying the year before that June evening when his son, Louis de Massué, passed under the noble gateway of Christ Church, Canterbury, and stood for the first time in the precincts of one of the stateliest Cathedrals in England.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE DEAN.

LOUIS DE MASSUÉ was not insensible to the beauty of the scene before him, as he went through a dark passage into the Priory Court, in these latter times called the Green Court, surrounded by many quaint houses with gabled roofs, flanked on the Eastern side by the Deanery—formerly the old Priory. The noble towers of the Cathedral rose against the sky, now flushed with the hues of a summer sunset. The shadows of the trees lay on the turf, and “the guests of summer, temple-haunting martlets,” were darting hither and thither, twittering their contentment to find their year’s nests safe and undisturbed in the eaves of the houses. Peace seemed to reign in these sacred precincts, and it was hard to realise that the noise and turmoil of contending parties in the Church and State had ever disturbed the quiet seclusion of those who lived under the shadow of the great Minster, with its record of bygone ages.

The story of the murder of Becket was familiar to Louis, and for a few moments he paused thinking over that deed of brutal violence, and then of the procession, which once wended its way across those precincts to the tomb of the murdered Archbishop, where King



Henry did penance for his hasty passion and jealous fear of the power, of his once trusted friend.

Louis was startled by a voice near him asking:

"Do you desire to be directed to the Dean's dwelling, sir?"

Turning, he saw it was the surgeon who had been summoned to his mother two hours before, who thus addressed him.

"Yonder is the Dean's residence. I may say I took the liberty of mentioning to his reverence that a gentlewoman had arrived sick and travel-worn at the Chequers Inn."

"Indeed, sir!" Louis answered, in a tone which implied he desired no further conversation.

Dr. Trotman remembered that his patient at the Chequers might be remunerative, and instead of resenting Louis's short answer to his information, he said:

"I may say further for your guidance, sir, that his reverence is in great anxiety as to the condition of one of his daughters, and if you desire an interview, may I suggest that you should defer your visit till the morrow? I wish you good evening, sir. I speak with the best intentions."

"Who doubts it, sir?" Louis said, turning away and walking with rapid strides to the gate of the courtyard which led to the porch of the Deanery. He was about to pull the bell, and had his fingers on the iron handle wrought in the form of a grotesque lion's head, when the door opened and a gentleman, in clerical attire, with a full cassock and bands and a shovel hat, came out. His face was full of kindness, and his voice was well modulated as he said:



"Your pleasure, sir? Do you seek any information, if, as I take it, you are a stranger in Canterbury?"

Louis made his most courtly bow, and holding his velvet cap with its little plume in his hand, he said:

"I was hoping to be so fortunate as to see Dr. Tillotson. I bear a letter of commendation—or rather I would say a few words of commendation—from a kinsman of mine, the Marquis de Ruvigny."

"Forsooth, sir, any relation of the noble Marquis has a claim on my attention. You are French—I need scarce ask the question."

"On my father's side, sir, I am French; my mother is English. But I would not trespass on your time unduly. Will it please you to appoint any other and more convenient hour to see me?"

"The present will be best," the Dean said, turning back into the hall. "Follow me, sir, to my library, and I will listen with all attention to what you have to say."

Louis did as he was invited, and soon found himself in a long low room, full of books ranged on deep shelves. In the centre of the room was a long oak table, covered with papers, on which stood a large ink-horn and sheaf of quills arranged in a shallow jar, or pot of coarse blue earthenware. Dr. Tillotson seated himself in a large chair with an elaborately carved back and arms, and pointing to another of smaller proportions, said:

"Be seated, sir, by the fire, for our English Junes are scarce like yours in France, and we kindle wood fires all through the summer to keep off chills and agues."



As he spoke the Dean gave the log of wood nearest to him a touch with his foot, and a merry blaze sprang up, which seemed to Louis to be the only bright element in the shadowy room. For the bay window at the end was so covered with festoons of ivy and rose branches that, the aspect being north, but little light came in at this late hour of the evening.

Dr. Tillotson leaned back, crossed his gaitered legs, rested his elbows on the arms of the chair, folded his large shapely hands, and said, with a twinkle in his eye:

"I fancy my good friend Trotman has already given me some inkling of your position here. Your mother lies sick at the Chequers—is it not so?"

"Yes, sir, the surgeon, whom we summoned to my mother, has been, I find, over meddlesome in my affairs."

"Nay, nay, he is a good man. Judge him not harshly, if he loves a little gossip—he is only like the best of us at times. He comes here to give my sweet daughter the benefit of his advice, and would that he or the London physician could really hit the cause of her malady." And the Dean sighed heavily. "But come, sir, give me some outline of your requirements, and of what has brought you to England."

"The story might weary you, sir, were I to enter into all its details—religion—"

"You are not a Papist?" the Dean interrupted quickly.

"No," Louis replied. "My father held the extreme views of those whom in England you call, as I believe, Separatists. For these people clouds gather in France, and persecution already begins to spread. His death



left us with a small patrimony. My English-born mother had a notion that to return to her native land would ensure safety for her and my two young sisters; and for this reason we have left our ancient home, some leagues to the west of Amiens, and come hither, halting at Canterbury after two days' tossing in the Channel and, almost worse, a night and part of a day in a rumbling stage-waggon, which reached this city this afternoon at four o'clock or thereabouts. As for me, I was attached to the suite of a French nobleman by the intervention of my kinsman, whose words permit me to hand to you. They are few," he added rather bitterly, "but may be all that I had a right to expect as a poor son of the house of Ruvigny from its wealthy head. Here are the words, sir, and at least they bespeak confidence entertained by the Marquis in your kindness of heart."

The Dean took the letter and read the commendation without any remark. Then he turned to the address on another cover.

"Dr. Fitzwilliam! ah, he is also a friend of the noble lady whom the Marquis may well be proud to call his niece, and any man his friend."

"I hoped, sir—I dared to hope—that one of my sisters might find a place in the household of a lady of rank like this Lady Russell, and that leaving one sister with my mother to tend and care for her, I might by reason of your intervention be placed on the suite of some gentleman about the court or otherwise. I am a fair scribe; naturally I can speak French and write it with ease, and I can handle a sword with any man—French or English."

Dr. Tillotson was silent for a few minutes. He held



the letter in his hand and seemed to be thinking over what he should say next.

"You speak of the court, sir. The court is no place for those who have not the shield of faith to protect them. We have as yet said naught of the religion you profess. Pardon me, if I ask you is it dear to you? Is it of the heart, and does it guide your life?"

"I am loath to make any profession," Louis said, "which might give you a false notion of what I am. I have no sympathy with the views held by my father, though they were sealed by the blood of the Vaudois in times past, and though the murdered Huguenots suffered for them a cruel and shameful death."

"You could conform to the doctrines and practices of the church as by law established in this kingdom, you think?"

"I do think so, sir, not from any notion of time-serving, but because I feel that a definite creed and prayers, which have been the language of thousands commend themselves to me, before the long exordium which those you call Separatists consider as prayer."

"Good," Dr. Tillotson said, "as far as it goes. Nor would I pry further into your inmost heart. There is One who judges because He knows, and we who know so little of the workings of the hearts of those nearest to us should forbear judgment. But," the Dean said solemnly, "there are certain words which come from a divine source—'*By their fruits ye shall know them.*'"

After this there was a pause, and Louis felt, he scarcely knew why, deeply moved. The wood fire sent out a flickering light on the heavy volumes on the shelves, and revealed here and there the gold letters



on the backs of some crimson leather books lying on the table. The light flickered, too, on the face of the Dean, and brought out the strongly-marked features and played round the full lips where benevolence and kindness seemed to dwell. The scene was for ever written on Louis's memory, and in the profound stillness which reigned, the Dean's last words seemed to repeat themselves in the inmost heart of which he had spoken—"By their fruits ye shall know them."

Presently the cathedral clock chimed a quarter to eight, and Louis rose to take his leave.

"I will see you to-morrow," the Dean said, "and your mother and young sisters. May God bless you and show you how to be of the greatest service to them. They are helpless and need your care. By-the-bye, before we part, tell me your mother's maiden name."

"My mother is the daughter of a goldsmith in Cheapside, named Jenkyns. She was left an orphan at a very early age, and was scarce more than a child when she married my father. Of her relations she knows naught, but imagining that her brother may be wealthy she desires to seek him out." Louis added, not without a tone of reluctance in his voice, "My mother's family was not noble, though I have every reason to believe respectable."

"Very good, very good," the Dean said. "I will think over all you have said, and, as I say, see you to-morrow. For the present, I bid you good-night."

When Louis left the Deanery, he found himself under the deep blue sky of the summer evening, where



already stars were shining and a crescent moon was setting in the clear heavens. There is a charm in the presence of a noble Minster which exercises a spell over those who are in sympathy with the past, and its heroes and saints. The thought of the hands that raised these great cathedrals, the minds which planned them, the zeal and devotion which caused kings and princes to be ready to give out of their abundance towards the foundation, and completion of these stately monuments, standing as an open record, to all who have eyes to see and hearts to feel, of the history of far-distant times—all conspire to fill the heart with vague longings and aspirations, which can scarcely be translated into words.

Some such longings and aspirations were in Louis de Massué's heart this evening. He was standing on the threshold of a new and untried life, and the Dean's solemn manner and emphatic words seemed to repeat themselves in his inner self. "By their fruits ye shall know them." He had heard enough of the Court of Charles the Second, and he had seen enough of the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, to make him fully aware of the force of those words. Whether they were called Papist or Protestant, how unworthy were the fruits by which they were known. Excess of pleasure, and indulgence of sinful desires, furious hatred between those who differed from each other in articles of faith, these were the marks of both, while the evidence of Faith in daily life was too often utterly wanting.

Louis felt as keenly as any man could that he had many a time failed in self-restraint, and his fiery temper, when roused, was like an ungovernable steed which had



plunged him more than once into serious trouble. But as he strolled under the shadow of Canterbury Cathedral that summer night, his young soul was uplifted in the longing for higher and nobler aims.

He returned to the Chequers Inn, and being tired in mind and body, he slept soundly until the sun was high in the heavens the next day.

His sisters were all alive and in good spirits when he met them in the parlour. "Who is a lie-a-bed now?" Clarice exclaimed. "We have been waiting to break our fast till we are ready to eat our fingers. Mistress Bunce has stepped in and out, asking a thousand questions as to what we would please to eat—fresh trout, soles, meat pasty, wine and ale. All are ready for you, Louis."

"How is our mother, Clémence?" Louis asked. "This child chatters so fast I can't edge in a word."

"Mother is rested, she says, but she feels too weak to rise. What is to be done next, Louis? Whither are we to go? Have you nothing to propound?"

"Let us break our fast before we talk of plans, and be cautious. Clarice, if you talk freely, speak in French, for walls have ears, and I take it Mistress Bunce and her stout serving-maid are likely to make good use of theirs.

"She boxed poor Master Bunce's ears this morning. We heard the slap, did we not, Clémence? Oh, grave Clémence! you are ready-made saint, and I—well, I'm a ready-made sinner."

"Peace, Clarice," her brother said, for Mistress Bunce now came in with inquiries as to what fare the gentle-folk would like best to taste.



"It is Friday," she said significantly, "and there's fish, if it please you, sir—a basket of soles and plaice came from Dover yesterday by the stage."

"Oh, I smelt them," Clarice cried. "Faugh! they can't be fresh."

"As fresh as the roses in your cheeks, young mistress," Mrs. Bunce said, for like the doctor she was anxious to keep those who might be profitable guests.

"Let us have a rasher of your good bacon and a pint of milk for my sisters, and a cup of wine for my own drinking. What have you to offer to the sick lady?"

"A finely made posset of wheaten bread and milk. It is on the fire and ready. Poor madam seems but weakly this morning."

"I will take it to her," Louis said, "if you will let me have it."

"I can take it, Louis," Clémence said.

"No, satisfy your own appetites; begin on that great manchet of wheaten bread, and the butter, which looks fresh and good. I want to visit my mother and inquire as to her health."

"A good son!" Mistress Bunce said approvingly,—  
"a good son, and a good son makes a good husband. I'll be bound there's many a fair lady ready."

"Oh, that woman's tongue!" Louis murmured. "I shall be right glad to get beyond the sound of it."

The basin of bread and milk, steaming hot, soon made its appearance on a tin salver which was polished so brightly it looked like silver, and a wooden spoon lay by the side of the basin. Louis took the salver in his hand and said:



"I shall be back ere the bacon is fried, and Clémence, I must have clean ruffles and collar. Have you got them ready?"

Then Louis went upstairs at a pace which made Mistress Bunce, who watched him from below, exclaim:

"Did'st ever see the like? He will be spilling half the milk before he gets to madam's chamber."

But Mistress Bunce was wrong. Louis had a steady hand, and an even, if a quick tread, and he reached his mother's chamber without spilling more than a few drops of the milk posset.

Madame de Massué was propped up with pillows, dressed in a blue night-robe with numerous frills. Her face was pale, but was still fair to look upon. Her hair was a little lighter than her son's, and a few grey streaks might be seen in the natural curls which fell on either side of her face. Clémence had combed and smoothed them that morning, and made her mother's toilette in expectation of the doctor's visit. Madame de Massué's small figure looked very small in the large expanse of feather bed on which she lay, and Louis had to stretch over a billowy pile of down, to place the tray before his mother.

"Well, mother mine, you look like yourself to-day. See I have brought you your breakfast. Now eat every morsel while I wait on this perch," and Louis swung himself upon the carved board at the foot of the bed, which creaked ominously at such an unwonted burden.

"Oh! dear Louis, my dear son! I cannot eat all this—no, my appetite is gone. I lay awake in the night thinking I should die in this bed, this great heavy



bed!" Her voice was more like that of a querulous child than of a woman, and Louis replied:

"Nay, mother, take heart. We have no more seas to cross, and the worst of our journey is over."

"What do you propose to do, Louis?"

"I have not come to any decision yet, but I shall soon have a visit from the Dean of this cathedral to whom the Marquis commended us. I saw him last evening, and he seems kindly and considerate. I could leave you and my sisters here—"

"Leave us—leave us here!" Madame de Massué exclaimed. "Oh, no, I will not be left here. I will go to London and find my brother."

"It will be wiser to suffer me to precede you. I can hire a horse of our host, and make inquiries. You meanwhile shall rest here with my sisters, and recover from the long journey and voyage over that stormy sea."

"Oh, do not speak of it, Louis. I shudder to think of it. And yet I am only a weight upon you; it would have been well if I had died and gone down into those horrible waves."

"We should have shared the same fate," Louis said, "and as for me, I have no desire to die. I mean to live and be your staff and comfort," he added.

"You are ever that, dear Louis. "You know I love you," and then a little hysterical sob broke out.

"Now, no tears, mother. You must finish the posset. You only want food and rest and you will be as young as ever again."

"I can eat no more, Louis," Madame de Massué said. "Take the tray away—take it away, I can eat no more."



Louis descended from his elevation on the foot board and took the tray from the bed, observing that the contents of the basin had nearly all vanished—but he was wise enough to make no comment on this.

“You will go to London, you say—and find my brother?”

“If he is alive I will find him, yes.”

“He was always kind to me when we were children: when we were left orphans, I cried and said I would never leave him. Ah! I was only sixteen when your father came to the meeting and loved me. Only seventeen when you were born, twenty-two years ago. I am not old now; am I, Louis?”

“Of course not—you are young and will be blooming again very soon. Now I must go to break my fast, for I am mighty hungry, and I smell the goodly smell of the rashers of Mistress Bunce’s bacon which have been frying for my benefit. So adieu, sweet mother.”

“You will find my brother, Louis. He had a name that is not over common—Ethelbert—Ethelbert Jenkyns—it sounds well. My own name is plain Alice, Alice Jenkyns. Ah! but your father said he loved a plain name—he used to call me “*pauvre petite Alice*.”

“Adieu, adieu, mother,” Louis said, as he left the room. He had often heard all this before—many more times than he could count; but he was almost always patient with his mother and shut his eyes to her little weaknesses and vanity. She was his mother, and to a chivalrous man like Louis de Massué the fact



that she was his mother and helpless, covered a multitude of faults.

The Dean was true to his promise, and the brother and sisters had scarcely finished their breakfast when the door of the parlour was thrown open, and master Bunce announced in a loud sepulchral voice, which seemed to come from his boots:

“His honour, the Dean!”

Louis rose hastily to greet their visitor, and with the well-bred ease of manner which never deserted him, he begged the Dean to take the chair by the window—the only chair which seemed at all suitable for his portly person.

“You are very good, sir, to visit us so early,” Louis said. “May I be permitted to present my sisters?”

Clarice advanced at once, made a low curtsy, and when the Dean held out his hand, kissed it respectfully.

“This is Clarice, my younger sister. Come forward Clémence,” her brother said, for Clémence stood like a fawn at bay looking at the Dean with shy startled brown eyes.

“A pretty pair, forsooth, sir,” the Dean said in his kindly, hearty manner. “What may their ages be?”

“I am nineteen, sir,” Clarice—always ready to speak—said. “Clémence is one year older; she is twenty.”

“Ah, I have a pair of daughters, but one who is the age of the elder of you two would give something



for your roses. They both look the picture of health," the Dean said, turning to Louis.

"Yes, sir, perhaps living much in the open air, and with none of the bustle and noise of the world coming near them, may account for that. My sisters have led retired lives in our old home."

"The surest way to get good looks and keep them," was the reply. "And how does the good lady, your mother, do this morning?"

"She has slept well, and I think will be able to rise from her bed later, but we await the visit of the doctor."

"That is well, but I fear me the bustle and constant arrival of folk at the hostel may be a trial to one who is scarce convalescent. I have thought over your position, and would fain be of use to you, if possible—but first tell me your own views as to the future. Do you desire to start soon for London?"

"As soon as may be, sir. I must discover my mother's brother—if indeed he still lives—and I would desire to present my commendatory letters to Dr. Fitzwilliam."

"To this I will add one to the Lady Russell; but, meantime, you will leave these two young sisters and your mother in Canterbury?"

"It would seem to be the best course to pursue, for my mother is not in a condition for further travel at present."

"So it would appear. Now we have a small dwelling in Priory Yard unoccupied—I speak of Dean



and Canons when I use the plural, not as assuming royalty," the Dean added with a smile. "Well, if you see good, I will order the house to be prepared for your mother and this pair of young sisters. A sober woman is in charge, and she can remain with what small remuneration you may deem right to give her. The house is void, owing to the death of the last tenant, two months ago. He was a stranger in Canterbury, and died intestate. Little is known of him, except that he paid rental regularly, and was a constant attendant at the daily matins and evensong, in the Cathedral. We purpose to keep the house as he left it for a time, lest any relative should appear and claim the furniture as his heir. This is unlikely. The good woman in charge tells us he received no letters, and was alone in the world. Now we will place this house at your disposal. It will be at least a quiet, if temporary retreat, where your mother may recover her health and find, it may be, consolation in the daily prayer to which she can resort without fatigue."

"Your goodness, sir, is very great," Louis said. "It will relieve my shoulders of a heavy burden during my enforced absence in London."

"Are *we* a burden, Louis?" Clarice said, putting her hand within her brother's arm.

"No, no, I cannot allow that to be possible," the Dean said with one of his bright smiles. "But hark! the bell is ringing for matins. I must return to the Deanery for a few minutes before I go to the Cathedral. Will you come and discover for yourselves the beauty of our Liturgy as it rises in prayer and praise under



the lofty roof of the Church, where it has sounded now, thank God, for many years?"

"Oh! Louis, yes; let us come," Clarice said eagerly. "Clémence, let us hasten to make ourselves ready."

"Nay, Clarice, we may not both leave our mother, you can accompany Louis."

The Dean had already taken his departure, and the two girls were full of his praises.

"He is a dear old gentleman," Clarice said; "though he ought not to have chucked me under the chin at parting, as if I were a child."

"He didn't do that to me," Clémence said. "If you look like a child, well, you must be treated as one."

"Mistress Gravity!" Clarice said, "I do not profess to be a ready-made saint like you."

"Peace, Clarice," Louis said. "Let us have no wrangling. I pray you, when I leave you at Canterbury, to comport yourself as my sister should."

Clarice's reply was to spring upon Louis and kiss him. "I'll do all you wish, you good brother, but confess you like variety, and that if everyone were as sedate as Clémence—well, the world would be somewhat *triste*—*triste*; yes, the English have no word for that. For me, I am never *triste* for more than two minutes. But take me with you to the matins the Dean spoke of!" And Clarice danced away to make herself ready for the service.

"You will like this plan of the good Dean's, Clémence?" Louis asked, when he was left for a few minutes with his elder sister.

"Yes," Clémence said, "but I have misgivings as to



whether our mother will approve it. She is so set upon getting to London and her brother."

"Her brother! He is but a vision which it pleases her to conjure up. He may be dead and buried these many years for aught we know. I shall start for London next Monday, and I shall hope to leave you all in the house offered by the Dean as a safe asylum, till I can make my way to London and return to you."

"As you please, Louis. I am ready to do all you desire, but—"

"You think Clairice will chafe against the quiet of the precincts, and the poor mother make her moan. You have patience, my good Clémence, at command, and I trust to you, young as you are."

"Not so young now, Louis. Twenty years old, and our mother was married when she had only counted sixteen years."

"Ah! well, all in good time, *petite*." And Louis, hearing Clairice's step in the passage, escaped before Mistress Bunce could make her appearance to ask what fare would her guests please to partake of for supper.

"Breaking your fast so late," she said to Clémence, "you will scarce need dinner at noon. It is near upon ten o'clock now, for the second chime is ringing at the minster. But may be the sick lady may like a sup of broth, well seasoned, as milk posset is not much stay to the stomach."

Clémence had to listen to a long harangue from Mistress Bunce, which, with her strong Kentish accent was half unintelligible to her. It was easy to follow the Dean, who spoke pure English in a deliberate



fashion, but this rapid, high-pitched utterance bewildered poor Clémence. The appearance of the doctor was a relief, and saying,—“I will consult my mother as to her wishes, madame,” she hastened to join Dr. Trotman on his way to Madame de Massué’s chamber.

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## CHAPTER III.

## A GRACIOUS LADY.

LOUIS DE MASSUÉ arrived in London on a gloomy, murky evening, when the aspect of everything was dark and cheerless. A drizzling rain was falling, and the streets were in the hopeless condition of mire and mud, which the citizens of those days seemed to accept as inevitable, and made but little attempt to improve the narrow thoroughfares. The great fire still left its traces in the city, and Sir Christopher Wren's noble Cathedral was but slowly rising to replace the old St. Paul's.

Louis, like all people of a sensitive temperament, was always affected by the weather. This dull atmosphere, rayless and heavy, depressed him, and as he threw himself from his horse in the courtyard of an inn in the Strand, he thought after all he had come on a bootless errand, and that he was likely to return to Canterbury with no tidings of the uncle on whom his mother set such high hopes.

"It was folly to leave France—at least there we have sunshine and light. It is not yet four o'clock and midsummer, and I can scarce see my fingers in this dingy old hostel."

Louis's manner and appearance were sufficiently distinguished to ensure respect and attention, and his host was anxious to set before him his best fare, and



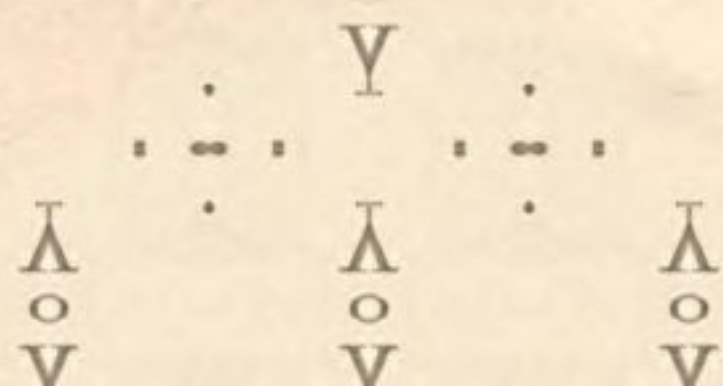
to assure him his horse should be well looked after. Louis had been the greater part of two days in the saddle, having slept at Strood on the previous night, and before he sat down to the plentiful supper the landlord provided, he went to his chamber and exchanged his heavy boots and riding-surtout, for the suit in which Clémence had not failed to sew fresh ruffles and repair a rent in the lace of the collar. There were two or three other guests in the long, low parlour with a sanded floor, where Louis was invited by the host to sit down to supper served at the upper end of the board, while the other less-favoured guests were served at the lower end. Louis heard an animated conversation going on, and was aware that inquiring glances were now and again directed towards him, and that the voices were lowered from time to time, as if to imply that the speakers were not willing that what they said should reach the ears of the young stranger.

Presently a young man, whom the landlord conducted to a place at the board opposite Louis, smiled and made a courteous inclination of his head as he threw aside his damp velvet cloak and shook back the heavy curls from his shoulders.

"A dull evening, forsooth," he remarked, "and the rain falling in that subtle way which wets you to the skin all unawares."

"Yes," Louis said, "London is a dismal city, methinks."

"Dismal? Nay, you must not judge it by a day like this. We are gay enough, and jovial too, when occasion requires. You are a stranger in our city, and know naught of it, perhaps."





"Yes," Louis said. "Nor do I desire a more intimate acquaintance."

"Ah, you will alter your mind ere long, as doubtless you have introductions to those who will soon show you that we London folk can be gay. Forsooth, we are a trifle too gay for the times!"

There was something very attractive in this young man, and he was a proof that an Englishman does not always merit the character of cold reserve towards strangers. Louis found his company a very pleasant diversion, and the two young men drank some of the landlord's best wine together, at the conclusion of the meal to which both had done ample justice.

"Can I be of any service to you, sir?" was the final question, as the two young men pushed back the benches and rose from the table. "Pardon me if I am officious in offering advice; but, as I can of course discover that you are French, possibly an English guide may not be unacceptable. You speak English so perfectly," the young man hastened to say, "were I in Paris I should need help ten times more, as I fear I only know half a dozen words of your language."

Louis took the offer in good part, and said:

"I am, as you rightly think, a stranger here. My name is Louis de Massué."

"And mine, Richard Cheeke. My father is Sir Thomas Cheeke. I am a younger son, and not held of much account, but I have some good friends—and surely your name is that of the Ruvigny family?"

"Yes, I belong to the younger branch of that family. The Marquis holds me as a somewhat remote kinsman."



"I do not doubt it. I would say the grand folk of a family are prone to make the lesser members small and of no account. As a friend, may I inquire if you have introductions—letters commendatory, as the phrase goes—to any person of note here?"

"Yes," and Louis drew out his pocket-book and said: "I have a letter here addressed to Dr. Fitzwilliam, at Windsor, and a few words commending me to the Lady Russell, from the Dean of Canterbury."

"Could anything be more lucky! I have an acquaintance with that lady—I might almost say a friendship, but I leave that last honour to my elder brother, who takes the best things from me of every kind—friends, money and—but all this is beyond the mark. If it pleases you, I can accompany you to see that gracious lady, who is now in London, at her mansion in Southampton Square. I can take you thither at once, if you desire it. And is there any other personage you seek?"

Louis hesitated, and then, with a laugh, said:

"I am on the quest for a lost uncle. Methinks you are not likely to know aught of him. He may be dead, or he may be living—I know not—nor is it a great matter to me which may be found to be the case. His name is Ethelbert Jenkyns."

"Ah! I know him well! There is scarce a young gallant who does not frequent his shop to buy gauds for his lady love. He is the goldsmith and clock-maker in St. Paul's Churchyard. The business was moved from Cheapside after the big fire, and your worthy uncle has builded for himself a good house, where he and his daughter live. Now," he added, "methinks you



must be born under a lucky star, for here am I ready to tell you of your lost uncle, and conduct you to the presence of my Lady Russell, as she is now called. For some time after her second marriage she was known as Lady Vaughan, but when my lord, by the death of his elder brother, became heir to the Earldom of Bedford, my lady took her rightful name. Do not think me too bold if I ask another question; are you a Papist or Protestant?"

"Protestant. The De Massués have held to the reformed faith for many years. The tide in France is setting strongly against us, as my noble kinsman the Marquis well knows. Soon persecution, which is even now making itself felt, will be rampant. This is one, nay, the chief reason why I came to England, to place my mother and young sisters in safety."

"Safety? Well, there are dangers here. This country is full of cross currents, and it is the path of true wisdom to steer clear of rocks and shoals. I may tell you that there are, at this moment, two parties struggling for victory: the country *versus* the King. The Bill of Exclusion, which the country partizans have tried to force upon the King, is met with bitter violence, and, for my part, I think the bitterness is not all on one side. Before you are launched on the cross currents of which I spoke, I give you a word of warning, to be cautious in expressing any opinion, and to beware of confiding too readily in any man, or woman either, for that matter."

"I thank you for your well-meant advice," Louis said. "I am not prone to confide in every chattering popinjay whom I come near, still less to exchange



opinions with him. It may be," he added, with a flash of his dark lustrous eyes, "I have already been too hasty in confiding in a stranger."

"Nay, now, do not take offence where none is intended," Richard Cheeke said good-naturedly. "And do not accept my offer to conduct you to my Lady Russell if you choose rather to present yourself without me. She will give you my character if you are dubious. I am Dick Cheeke of the Middle Temple, expected to make my fortune by the law, and so hold up my head, although a younger son. I will not say I affect the profession my worthy father has marked out for me, and should vastly prefer a less monotonous existence. I am not yet called to the Bar—I am but eating dinners and keeping my terms; and I take life easily, and see my companions in my chambers for various diversions, other than the study of law. But, by Heaven, unless we set forth at once, it will be too late to pay our respects to my lady whom I hope we may find alone. My lord is at Woburn, and when he is present she hath ears and eyes for none besides, save, indeed, her children, whom she worships. My lady is a pattern of all virtues, and as so many women about the Court—ay, and the city also—are of another sort, we may well make much of her."

When the two young men turned out of the courtyard of the inn, the sky had cleared somewhat, and a rosy gleam had shot out from the west and illuminated the roofs of the houses, finding its way through open spaces, and making the vanes on the church steeples shine like gold.

"You see the sun does not quite desert London,"



Richard Cheeke said, "and this clearance of the evening sky, we may take as a good omen for you."

"Why not for you also?"

"Oh, I have given up hoping for any luck, and take life easily, notwithstanding. Now then, this is Southampton House. We must inquire of the porter if her ladyship will receive us."

The answer to the question was favourable, and the two young men followed a lacquey, wearing the Russell livery, up a wide though somewhat dark oak staircase with heavy balustrades, to a gallery running round two sides of the quadrangle, and to which the staircase led. As Richard Cheeke and his companion paused at the heavy oak door with its large handles wrought in brass, the sound of children's voices was heard, and a peal of merry laughter.

The servant evidently recognised Richard Cheeke as no unusual visitor, but looked inquiringly at his companion.

"Monsieur de Massué craves an audience with your lady," Richard said, and then the heavy door was thrown open, and a fair picture of domestic happiness was revealed.

Lady Russell was seated at a table, a little girl on either side of her. She had a quill in her hand, and a large sheet of paper before her.

"I will write to my papa," the child said. "I will send him my duty, mother, and while you finish your letter I will think what I must say."

Lady Russell hushed the eager child by a few words, saying:



"Nay, Rachel, do not be so importunate. I must greet these gentlemen ere my letter is sealed."

Lady Russell now rose, and, with the two little girls clinging to her gown, came forward with a smile, saying:

"Ah! Richard Cheeke, are you come to while away my solitary hours with backgammon—and your friend?"

"Madame," Louis said, advancing and gracefully bending one knee, "I am come hither with commendatory letters from the Marquis de Ruvigny and the Dean of Canterbury."

"My good uncle! Ah, then, sir, I bid you welcome."

Louis had put the letter in Lady Russell's hand, with another from the Dean of Canterbury.

"Yes!" she said, glancing at them. "I had an interview with my good friend the Dean only yesterday. He bade me receive with all kindness a young kinsman, and I gladly do so."

"Madame," Louis said, "I do not claim close kinship with the house of Ruvigny. My father belonged to a somewhat remote branch of that noble race; yet, as we bear the name of De Massué, it pleases the Marquis in some sort to recognise me."

"And it will please me no less," Lady Russell said, with a winning smile. "But permit me to finish a letter I have in hand to my lord, and which I must despatch to Woburn by special messenger. Meanwhile, my good Richard, do your best to entertain my kinsman, and afterwards we will discuss any matters he may desire—and perchance try his skill at backgammon."



The children, especially Rachel, were growing impatient.

"Mother, I desire to put down what I wish to say to my papa."

"Yes, Rachel, we will finish our letter, if these gentlemen will pardon our seeming discourtesy."

Then Lady Russell reseated herself at the table, and Richard Cheeke retired to a deep bay window, which was at the further end of the room, and said to Louis:

"Well, are you content with your reception?"

"I think Lady Russell the most enchanting woman I ever saw. What graceful manners, and what a sweet voice!"

"Yes, and you will find many to agree with you in your opinion, and yet," Richard said, "I do not believe there is a man living who dare approach her with familiar gallantry, which is the fashion of the court. She has innumerable friends and relatives, and amongst them all I know not one who could speak a word in her disparagement. Would to Heaven there were more women like her!"

Rachel, Lady Russell, was at this time in the full prime of womanhood. She had perhaps no right to be reckoned as a "beauty," but her face shone with intelligence and happiness. Her "joy cup," as she would have called it, was full, her little daughters, Rachel and Catherine, were her constant companions, and a son had been lately given her, who was the light of her eyes. But all love and all devotion centred in her husband. Between them there was that perfect confidence and mutual affection which, when



they exist, raise the married life into a near approach to the bliss of Eden. In the midst of a court where the marriage tie was thought a thing of no account, where licence and sensuality reigned supreme, Lady Russell shone as a pure light shines in darkness, the brighter by reason of contrast, and the more to be valued because so rare.

Lady Russell wore her abundant hair parted above her white brow; it was combed back and gathered into a large knot on her neck, leaving a few light curls on either side of her face, and several wavy locks lying on her fair shoulders. On this evening, when she filled her young kinsman's heart with admiration, she wore a gown of pale blue, crossed in simple folds across her breast. A string of pearls was clasped round her throat, and her shapely arms were bare to the elbows, over which lace ruffles fell.

It is difficult to imagine a more perfect specimen of the high-born English gentlewoman, her French ancestry on her mother's side giving her the grace and *esprit* which were amongst her many charms.

Louis watched her from the distant bay window with a fascinated gaze. The child's message was written, and then the two little maidens departed to bed, summoned by a nurse who had put aside the tapestry curtain at the other end of the room, saying:

"It is late, my lady—too late," she added. "Mistress Catherine should be a-bed."

"Nay, good nurse, do not reproach me. The children love to watch me write to my lord. The letter is all but finished, so run, my sweet ones, as nurse bids you." And then something was added



in a lower tone, and Catherine said, "Cathy won't forget."

Then they danced away, their mother following them with loving eyes, and kissing her hand to them as they disappeared behind the curtain. Scarcely had they departed when a servant appeared to inquire if the letter for my lord was ready. It was there, carefully folded and sealed, and Lady Russell said:

"See that it does not miscarry, but is left at Brick Hill for Woburn on the morrow."

The man bowed and retired, and then Lady Russell, having put away her paper and quills, rose and said:

"You will think me wanting in courtesy and *les bonnes façons*, monsieur, but Richard there knows me too well to think I would be so wilfully. Now let us have a pleasant talk of things which concern you, Monsieur de Massué."

As she spoke, Lady Russell seated herself on a settle with soft cushions covered with velvet, and said:

"We will postpone backgammon for this evening, Richard, that I may lend an ear to what my young cousin has to tell. Your brother was with me last evening, and he won some half-crowns from me, the highest stake I ever play."

"My brother has ever the luck on his side, my lady, and I have always the reverse."

"Tut, tut, Richard. With health and strength and youth, what can you lack, unless," she added with sudden gravity, "the one thing which alone can make life, even the happiest life, blessed."

The lamps were now lighted and shed a soft



radiance on Lady Russell as she sat facing Louis, looking at him with kindly questioning eyes, as if to come to some conclusion as to what manner of man this young kinsman was. Apparently she was satisfied, for she said:

“I am quite ready to act a cousinly part, Louis, and thus dropping formality, let us exchange the histories of our birth, and find out how we stand to each other. One thing is clear: we claim kinship alike with one of the noblest of men, my mother’s brother, who is a true friend to the Protestant cause, and who has managed with wondrous skill to do his duty to his country and his king, regardless, as all true men must ever be, of suspicion and displeasure, while he has a good conscience towards God, and faithfully performs the work appointed to him. He is a great diplomatist, and conducts with wisdom negotiations between your king and ours. But his letters to me breathe a sad foreboding of what is coming on our Protestant brethren in France. He has entrusted me with letters of naturalisation, and I am to preserve them till the time of need. And now tell me of your circumstances, of which I have but an inkling from the Dean, and this short mention made of you by my uncle.”

Lady Russell was not slow to discover that Louis was not so warm an admirer of the Marquis de Ruvigny as she was. Pride and the shrinking of a sensitive nature from patronage, certainly blinded Louis’s eyes in some degree to his kinsman’s good qualities. He had an idea, most probably a mistaken idea, that the plebeian birth of his mother made the head of his father’s ancient house hold her children of less account



for that reason. The pride of race and of the prestige of the *haute noblesse* was strong in Louis, and as he told his story to Lady Russell, he touched but lightly on the quest for his mother's brother, now, according to Richard Cheeke's account, alive and well and carrying on business in St. Paul's Churchyard.

"I came to England," he said, "to ensure the safety of my young sisters, and to satisfy my mother in her desire to discover if her only brother yet survived. He is, it would seem, a goldsmith and clock-maker by trade, and of a different standing to that my father enjoyed, as the bearer of an ancient name."

"And have you found your uncle?"

"Nay, madame, I have scarce been in London six hours, but by the good offices of this gentleman, whom I met accidentally soon after my arrival, I may possibly do so."

"Of course you will do so," Richard interposed. "All the town has heard of Ethelbert Jenkyns and his daughter."

"Nay, Richard, not all the town," Lady Russell said, laughing. "At least I am an exception."

"It is not likely, madame, that you should have any experience of my mother's kindred," and then Louis quickly turned his story in another direction.

Lady Russell was a good listener as well as a brilliant talker, and encouraged by her evident interest and attention, Louis described the ruined château, his desolate home in Picardy, his sisters brought up there in retirement, his own position, obtained for him by the Marquis, as gentleman in the household of one of the French nobles. This he had given up at his father's



death, when he was called upon to look into his affairs and endeavour to retrieve the fortunes of his house.

"Finding it impossible," he said, "I yielded more readily to my mother's craving to return to England, combined as it was with the fear of persecution by the Catholic party, which is most surely in the ascendant in France. My sisters and their mother are, by the goodness of the Dean, established at Canterbury for a time, but I desire that one of them should be received by a gentlewoman in her household; and for myself, I would fain find a like position to that which I quitted in France."

"I will lay both desires before my lord," Lady Russell said, "and I will do my part in helping you to attain their fulfilment. My lord is now at Woburn, but I expect his speedy return, and then I shall summon my kinsman again and propound any scheme which may appear feasible. You are, I need not ask the question, a Protestant, my good cousin Louis?"

"Yes, madame, I am an adherent of the Reformed Faith."

"Ah! and we need firm friends at this time. Our ship of state is sailing in troubled waters and—" for a moment a cloud of anxiety passed over that sweet, bright countenance,— "we are by no means free from divisions. There are traitors in the camp, and it would seem at times that honest and true-hearted men might fare ill, through evil machinations."

"I have made monsieur aware, madam," Richard Cheeke said, "that in coming to England he has not come to a blissful haven—nay, on the contrary, he runs a risk of being caught by cross currents."



Another visitor was now announced, Richard Cheeke's eldest brother, who also received a gracious welcome; and soon after Louis de Massué took his leave, while the two brothers remained with Lady Russell.

It was no easy matter for a stranger to find his way in London in those days, and Louis, although he had been instructed by Richard Cheeke as to the street he was to cross and the turn he was to take, felt puzzled and bewildered. Parties of noisy revellers jostled against him continually, and the few oil lamps and torches only made darkness visible, for the clouds had returned after the short clearance at sunset, and, although it was the eve of the longest day, the night was murky and dark. Happily Louis could hire a link boy, and telling him where he wished to go, he was guided safely to his hostel in the Strand, where, after drinking a cup of spiced wine and eating some sweet cakes, he sought his chamber, and, tired with the events of the day, fell into a profound slumber.

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## CHAPTER IV.

## NEAR OF KIN.

THE morning dawned with the promise of a fine day, and Louis, refreshed with a night's rest and a good breakfast, set out early to find his mother's brother, Ethelbert Jenkyns. He remembered that Richard Cheeke had proposed to conduct him to his uncle's shop, but he preferred making himself known without this new-found acquaintance. It was satisfactory enough to be introduced to Lady Russell as her kinsman, but Louis did not feel that it would be equally agreeable to be introduced to a London tradesman as his nephew, by a young gentleman who evidently moved in a higher circle.

This pride of race was inherent in Louis, and although he sometimes took himself to task for indulging in it, he could not forget that he came of a family of ancient descent, and that he was, as his father's heir, the last representative of that branch of the house of Ruvigny to which he belonged.

As Louis passed through the London streets on that June morning, he attracted some attention. He had a graceful carriage and held his head high, returning any curious glances with a steadfast gaze. The streets at this early hour resounded with London cries, and fruit and vegetables, and country produce, were



hawked through the busy thoroughfares. Pamphlets and single sheets of the "news" were also thrust before him by the vendors, and "the last dying speech" of someone who had been executed on the previous day was bawled out in coarse unmelodious tones. Louis made his way through the busy crowd intent on their own concerns, without asking for direction, and, by some good chance, found himself in the open space before St. Paul's in less time than he had thought it would take him to reach it.

Sir Christopher Wren's noble building was not completed till long after this time, but the choir and transepts had risen to nearly their full height, and their fine proportions were not lost on Louis. Most of the houses which had been destroyed by the great fire were re-built, and Louis knew from what Richard Cheeke had told him, that he should find his uncle's shop somewhere in the churchyard. He walked leisurely along, glancing now and then at the windows of the houses, for now that he was on the point of meeting his uncle, he shrank from it.

"I shall find a dull *bourgeois*, I doubt not, given to money getting; and a daughter talking in the horrible *patois* which Mrs. Bunce calls English. It might as well be Hottentot—it is detestable."

Louis might have remembered that his mother's English was of a more refined character, and that both he and his sisters had learned to speak from her, and that she had come of this despised *bourgeois* race. But prejudice goes far to destroy both sight and memory, and it is difficult to see or hear things as they really are, when it exists. For Louis's bias was decidedly



against these new relatives whom he had come to seek out for his mother's sake, and with the fair vision of Lady Russell before him, he could not bring himself to look forward to meeting his uncle and his daughter, with anything like pleasure.

"It must be got over," he thought, "and the sooner the better. There is the name, and that must be the shop. As he looked up to read the name again on the signboard, he saw at an open window a fair young face looking down on him—the face of a girl which instantly reminded him of his sister Clémence. Seeing she was observed, the face was withdrawn; not before Louis had noticed a smile part the rosy lips and the colour rise on the rounded cheeks. He was provoked with himself for staring up at the window—a breach of courtesy he thought—for Louis had a chivalrous respect for women, and, in spite of several rude shocks, it was still dominant in him. The shop door was closed, for the day was yet young, and Master Jenkyns's customers were not likely to arrive so soon.

After some hesitation, Louis tapped at the door, and it was immediately opened by a young man, who asked him to enter. Louis found himself in a small room full of cases which contained jewels and ornaments, and were carefully guarded by padlocks. On the shelves, behind a wide counter nearly filling the floor of the shop, at the back of which these cases were ranged, were cupboards from which gold and silver tankards, and grace cups gleamed in the shadows of the dark shop. Beyond, however, there was light, and the ticking of clocks in a larger room, told that the premises extended in that direction.



"Can I serve you with aught, sir?" this young man asked, and he was proceeding to unfasten one of the cases, saying: "The wares are not laid out yet, but I can soon show you rings, amulets, brooches, or pins, if you will inform me what you require."

"I came to see Master Jenkyns on some business, not connected with these wares; may I hope to be allowed to speak to Master Jenkyns for a few moments?"

"I will inquire whether you can do so."

And it was not lost on Louis that the custodian of those precious things closed the case he had opened, and turned the key in the padlock. Louis's French accent was strong enough to testify to his nationality, although he spoke with fluency and with but little foreign idiom. But caution as to strangers was necessary, and instead of leaving Louis in the shop the young man put his hand to a bell, which made a loud, clanging sound, and in a very short time a light footstep was heard in a room above the shop, and in another moment a young girl stood in the doorway, which led to the long chamber beyond, where watches and clocks ticked incessantly, like racers trying to overtake each other, and never succeeding in the effort to keep together.

"This young gentleman desires to see my uncle, Faith."

Faith thus addressed seemed for a moment to lose her presence of mind. The most vivid colour rose to her cheeks, and she stood, a vision of beauty, in the doorway, recognising the young gallant whom, unknown to him, she had watched from her window as he slowly



perambulated the churchyard some minutes before, he had looked up and had seen her.

Louis bowed with his accustomed grace, and before Faith had recovered herself he said:

"I should be grateful to you, mademoiselle, if you would suffer me to see Master Ethelbert Jenkyns."

Faith hesitated no longer, but said, not in the *bourgeois* accent which so offended Louis's fastidious ear, but in a gentle, well-modulated voice:

"Follow me, sir, if it please you. My father has not yet come down to the shop—we dwell above."

Then she tripped lightly up the narrow stairs, and opening the door of a light spacious room, she said:

"Father, this gentleman has business with you."

A man, whose age it was not easy to decide, was seated at a table with his back to the window. He turned his head as his daughter spoke, laid aside his quill, and rising, said:

"Your servant, sir. What is your pleasure?"

"I come," Louis said, "to claim kinship with you. You will remember a sister who long ago married and left this country—her name was then Alice Jenkyns, now Alice de Massué."

A pair of grey eyes were now fixed on Louis's face—honest true eyes, which harmonised well with the grave mouth and resolute chin of a face which commanded respect. Master Ethelbert Jenkyns wore the long black coat of the Puritans, with spotless white linen collar and wristlets. His hair, tinged with grey, was short, and covered on the top with a small black velvet cap. His whole bearing was stately and deliberate, when, after a pause, he said:



"Alice—Alice Jenkyns—yes, I remember her—a child—scarcely more than a child when she passed out of my sight—the wife of a Frenchman."

"I am her son—her only son," Louis said. "She has sent me to claim your brotherly kindness for her and her children."

"Where is she? Yet in France?"

"No, sir; we have come to seek refuge in this country from persecution which threatens in France, and also because, with but a poor remnant of fortune, we could not remain in our old home."

Master Jenkyns held out both hands to Louis and turning to Faith, said:

"This is your cousin, my child. Bid him welcome."

Faith, who had been standing a little apart, now came nearer. Louis, turning to her, bent one knee, and taking her hand kissed it with all the reverence, which he had shown on the previous evening when introduced to the noble lady, his kinswoman on his father's side.

"I am proud indeed to claim so fair and beautiful a cousin as mine," he said.

"Nay, good nephew," Master Jenkyns interposed, "we do not love flattering words. My child has been taught to mistrust them."

Louis's spirit rose at once.

"Sir, I crave pardon," he said. "I will take heed in future to abstain from words, which like these I have just spoken, are true and no flattery."

And now another voice was heard singing in a chamber beyond that where Master Jenkyns had received Louis, and presently the tapestry hanging over a



door was thrown partly aside, and a face peeped out between the folds.

"May I not see the new kinsman? Oh, fie, little Faith, to keep him all to yourself."

"Peace, Esther, peace, you are ever too bold."

"Nay, do I look bold?" the girl said, pretending to hide her face in the tapestry curtain, and then peeping out again.

"Come in or depart," Master Jenkyns said sternly. "Eavesdropping is abhorred by all good Christians."

"Who said I was an eavesdropper? If the door is open and only a curtain over it, how could I help hearing the cousin had come. Did I not sing my loudest to let you be aware of my presence, and did I not see you, my fine gentleman, as I stood behind Fay here at the window? Ah! Faith blushes, and well she may. *I* kept in the background, she, after gazing at you with languishing eyes—"

"I will hear no more of this, Esther," Master Jenkyns said. "You know full well that I forbid vain talk. Make your respects to Monsieur Louis de Massué, and behave like a sober maiden, or begone."

Esther obeyed, as far as curtseying to Louis went, saying:

"I bid you welcome, sir, and perhaps, who can tell, you may not despise the poor little orphan who is kept by her uncle, not from love but from necessity. May I call you cousin?" This was all said in a tone half jest, half earnest. "We have the same uncle; Edward, who serves him so well in the shop, is my brother, and as he can't do without him, he puts me in the bargain—do you see?"



Louis was entirely taken by surprise by this sudden appeal. If the world had been searched, surely no greater contrast could have been found, than that which was presented between Faith and Esther. Esther's small, dark, mischief-loving face, mobile and changing every moment, her tiny figure and birdlike movements, were exactly the reverse of the gentle, quiet beauty of Faith. Somehow the tall lily in the large jar in the empty grate, seemed to Louis at that moment the meet emblem of his fair cousin, with her pure clear eyes, and white brow crowned with a mass of golden hair, which peeped out from the white cap she wore.

Nor was an emblem wanting which suited Esther. A brilliant scarlet poppy was at the back of the posy, and suggested this likeness also to Louis, as he stood for the first time among his *bourgeois* kindred, amazed that he had found them so widely different from what he had expected.

"Now, all greetings over, good nephew, let us have a more particular account of yourself and your mother."

"I left her at Canterbury, established in a small dwelling, in which the Dean has placed her. She is safe there for the time, till I can find out what it is best to do for my young sisters. For myself, I seek to be received in the household of some gentlemen, and earn what may be counted due for my services. The moneys which are left for the use of my mother and sisters are of no great amount, and upon me must fall the maintenance of my mother and sisters."

"As a good son and brother must needs feel it his duty and pleasure."



"Yes," Louis said, "I do not think my poor mother would tell you that I have failed as far as in me lies to do the first, nor that it was ever aught but the last."

Ethelbert Jenkyns now looked at his daughter, who had seated herself at her spinning-wheel at the further end of the long room, while Esther was toying with the threads, and playing sundry vexatious tricks with them.

"Faith, my good child," her father said, "our new-found kinsman will sit at our board for dinner at noon. Repair to the kitchen and do your best to provide what is needful to show our welcome. Esther," he continued more sharply, "leave play for once, and go down to the shop and lend a hand to your brother in any burnishing of the silver that may need it. Bid him summon me if there arises any business question with which he is not competent to deal."

Esther flitted up to the chair where her uncle sat, and with an arch glance at the handsome stranger, said,—

"You perceive, sir, that I am not deemed worthy to prepare dishes for your dinner, though I have oft-times to cook the food for the louts who work at the watchmaking. But I am ever an obedient slave."

Then, with a curtsey and a wave of her hand, Esther was gone.

"She is a strange creature," Master Jenkyns said. "Whence her flighty ways came, I know not. Her mother was the sister of my wife—my Faith's mother, and for her sake and hers only, I undertook the charge of Esther and her brother. He is a good lad and



steady. You may have heard from your mother, that I was taken as a boy by the man who continued my father's business; he treated me well, and dying early left me full possession of the stock and business, greatly enlarged since then. My wife was his daughter, and her sister lived with us. She had married a worthless reprobate who deserted her. I could not refuse to be a friend to her children; one repays me, but Esther is a plague and causes me much vexation."

"You must have a compensation in your daughter," Louis said. "Were there any doubt of our kinship, the likeness which I see between her and my sister Clémence would be a sufficient proof of the nearness of the tie."

"Ay! Faith is a jewel of more value than any in my possession. She has had many suitors," Master Jenkyns added, "but none are favoured as yet, and none are faithful Christians. And now," he added, "my good nephew, let us review your position. You speak of the noble Lord Russell and his lady. My lord holds stoutly to this Bill of Exclusion which the Lords have refused to pass."

"The Bill of Exclusion?" Louis questioned.

"Ay. Do you not know that there is a strong feeling against the succession of the Duke of York, who is a zealous and avowed Papist?"

"I am as yet ignorant of the affairs of England," Louis replied, "but is not that measure a strong one?"

"You are right, but it is a just one. I would have you weigh well what any meddling in public affairs in-



volves. In the miserable Popish plot hatched by Titus Oates, the heads of many innocent men were tumbling from their shoulders. Base and wicked witnesses swore lies and stuck to them, and the storm is not over. As a citizen, I have to protest against an injustice just perpetrated by the Lord Mayor. He is a minion of the Court—he has conformed to the Church, and withdrawn his presence from the non-conforming brethren, for his own aggrandisement. I know him! he is unhappy and mistrustful, feeling himself a traitor, and lacking courage to be aught beside. It would be too long to relate all the machinations of the Court which have led up to this action of their party in the city. Contrary to the time-honoured custom, the Mayor ruled that he had absolute power to choose both sheriffs, and dispense with the approval of the Common Hall. See now wherefore this is done; the sheriffs select the jurors, and thus the juries will be packed, and any man brought up on a charge of resistance, supposed or real, against the King, may be brought in guilty and lose his head.”

“And do you stand in any fear of this?” Louis asked.

“God knoweth—but I leave the matter with Him, who is the ruler of Princes. Why do I tell you of all this—a young stranger from another country? Because it is meet and right you should know that this realm is in bad case, and that while one man can swear falsely against another, there is no safety. The Parliament has been dissolved, but it is well known who were amongst the most stout supporters of that Bill of Exclusion, which was framed to deliver us from a



Popish prince. Lord Russell is one, and there are many other good men and true, who are with him. For the present, the Court party is triumphant, for the cities and boroughs throughout the country have been called on to surrender their charters to the King, and so demonstrate their loyalty, accepting others framed to suit a despotic government.

“For this,” Master Jenkyns said, with some heat, “for this the kingdom rejoiced in the return of the King, which was thought to ensure peace and prosperity. The people hailed him with one voice—and now—shameless women rule him—the Court is profligate, and the name of God is but taken in vain. Oh! it is a condition of things which makes one’s heart swell with mingled sorrow and wrath against evil-doers. I tell you this, my sister’s son, that you may consider well before you bring your young sisters, or plunge yourself into a very whirlpool of contending animosities, lies, and ill-doing.

“But, sir, sure there are many true-hearted men left—and women pure and good. I have but to look at the lady who so graciously welcomed me last night, and to your own fair daughter, to assure myself that all are not alike given up to evil.”

“I said not *all*. God forbid!” the goldsmith exclaimed, and then after a pause he spoke more calmly. “This matter of Sir John Moore, the Lord Mayor, is recent, and has, as a citizen, affected me deeply, hence what may seem to you undue heat. Now, let us consider your wishes. I am blessed by God with competence—nay, wealth—my hand is open to relieve your mother of any heavy burdens want of money



may lay on her. Let me know if help would be acceptable."

Louis for his own part shrank from the idea of receiving money from his uncle. Then he remembered how small his store was, and that the asylum granted by the Dean of Canterbury could be but temporary.

"You are good indeed, sir," he said, repressing the desire he felt to assert his independence in so many words. "Will you permit me to withhold any decision till I have had my promised interview with my Lord Russell."

"Assuredly, it is ever best to take time for decision. I would fain see your mother—Little Alice, we called her—poor little Alice, with the meek blue eyes. Ah! would I had been suffered to take her under my care when our parents died. After that I saw but little of her, save at the meetings of the faithful. At one of those your father cast his eyes upon her and in some haste married her. Well-a-day, all is ordered by infinite wisdom. Even the wrath of man shall praise Him."

The conversation had lasted for some time, when the tapestry covering the door was drawn aside and in the chamber beyond a plentiful board was spread. This room was over the long chamber below, where the workmen and apprentices carried on the mechanical part of Ethelbert Jenkyns's extensive business. At noon the premises below were closed, and master and men alike took their dinner and an hour's respite from labour.

It was a long board, with benches on either side,



and two chairs at the upper and lower end. At the upper end Master Jenkyns took his place, putting Louis on his right hand and Faith sat by his side. Below, with a somewhat marked division, the young man whom Louis had seen in the shop, took the head at that end of the board, Esther seated by him, the apprentices and two serving-maids on either side of the benches. Master Jenkyns stood with folded hands, and then, at a sign from her father, Faith tapped on the board with a wooden spoon, and Master Jenkyns began a long grace, during which Esther fidgeted and showed no sign of devotion, and only one or two of the apprentices seemed to be aware of what Master Jenkyns's words meant.

"A penance to pay before our empty stomachs are filled," Esther murmured, when at last the company were free to attack the wooden bowls of food at one end of the table; and at the other Louis was invited to taste the pasty which Faith's clever fingers had prepared, while a large silver goblet, chased in many curious devices, was passed to him filled with strong ale. Louis drank of this cup but sparingly, for he had never been accustomed to any beverage stronger than the wine of his own country, but his appetite satisfied even Master Jenkyns's idea of hospitality.

Louis was not slow to notice how many eyes were directed towards Faith, and that the young man at the lower end of the board did not look at him with any favour. Faith had now become quite at ease with her new kinsman, and talked to him with the freedom which shows the absence of self-consciousness. To his surprise, too, when he fell, as he sometimes did, into



his native tongue, Faith replied in French, with an English accent that was enchanting in Louis's ears.

"You did not think, good nephew, that my child could speak French, I see, but we have several times had dealings with some of your countrymen and women, who for fear of persecution had come hither. It has fallen to my lot to be of service to such sufferers for our Master's sake, and in return, one gentlewoman, whose name is too much for my clumsy tongue, instructed Faith in many things. Is it not so, my child?"

"Yes, father, Madame de Quesne was my good friend, and I learned much from her over and above stumbling out a few French words."

"Nay, I cannot suffer you to speak so of your French," Louis said. "It puts my English to shame."

"No, no," Faith exclaimed. "Sometimes it is hard to believe you are not English. Sometimes!" she repeated with a smile, "but not always."

"You must teach me better," Louis said. "I know I am troubled with your letter 'r,' and as to your accents and idioms, they are never quite right. Is it not so?"

"Yes," Faith said, and her clear eyes met her cousin's with a merry twinkle.

"Let us exchange lessons," Louis said. "I will be a good obedient pupil."

"*Nous verrons,*" Faith said, adding, "*peut-être* I shall not be so good, though I might try, like Queen Catherine, to do my utmost."

"Queen Catherine? *La reine Catherine?*" Louis questioned.



"The wife of our Henry the Fifth. Our great poet Shakespeare has written of her and shown her trying to make her French tongue speak English. Do you not know aught of Shakespeare?" Faith asked. Louis had to confess his ignorance, and Master Jenkyns said,—

"No loss, no loss, good nephew. Plays and playhouses are an abomination, and I never thanked your countrywoman for giving my child a taste for them."

"Nay, father, nay," Faith said. "Not for plays or playhouses. Sure, I may love our Shakespeare as a mighty poet without seeing a play. Nor do I wish to see one, but I will show you my dear little brown book some day; though I forgot, cousin, you may not love this play, for it tells of our English King conquering yours."

"It will not be the first victory English have had over French," Louis said, "nor," he added, "the last!"

Now the wooden spoon again tapped on the table and another thanksgiving followed; the benches were pushed back, and Master Jenkyns said:

"I must to my business now, good nephew, for it is the time of day when many resort to my shop. You may, if you please, return to the parlour, and Faith will entertain you for an hour with the sprite Esther."

Louis would fain have had no fictitious cousin to interrupt his conversation with the real one; but Esther danced before them into the parlour, holding the curtain back for them to pass, and calling her brother "Old sober face," she invited him to come and make acquaintance with the French cousin.

"I have done so much already," Edward replied,



and, in a lower tone, "I do not vastly crave to call him cousin. He is no kinsman of ours."

"You are as sour as a crab to-day, Edward," his sister said. "Go back to your burnishing and rubbing, and to your long rows of figures. We do not vastly crave to have your company," she said, in a mocking tone, repeating her brother's words. But Faith, hearing the wrangle, turned to Edward.

"Yes; come, Edward, and rest a while; you have had a long morning in the shop, and all work and no play, you know the rest—Come!"

Edward's stern face broke into a smile, and he said:

"I will come at your bidding, Faith, and go at your bidding."

"Tell us of your sisters, Louis." It was the first time Faith had uttered his name. "What are they like?"

"Clémence is like you," Louis said. "Can I describe her better? Like," he added, "but yet unlike, for she has not the quickness, I scarce know how to put in words what I mean, not the *esprit* which is for ever brightening your face. When I first saw you in the door-way below, I said 'another Clémence,' now I say 'another, but more beautiful Clémence.' Do you understand?"

Faith's cheeks now wore a bright rose colour, and taking up her needlework, at which she was an adept, she said in her gravest manner:

"Your other sister?—tell us of her."

"She more resembles me," Louis said, "which I do not count an advantage; but Clarice, though a little too



swift with her tongue, is a good child. You must see them both, and pass your own judgments."

Edward had sat silent during the conversation, and did not attempt to enter into it. Presently he rose and left the room.

"Poor Ned!" Esther said, "poor Ned! I have the heartache for him, while Faith's heart is hard as a stone. Could you believe so much, Cousin Louis? No! You shake your head—you do not know her yet—some day, perhaps, my heart will ache for you, and then you will say, 'Poor little Esther was right.'"

Louis saw that Faith was by no means pleased to have these jests made at her expense, and though it was plain that Esther was only joking, he wished she were anywhere but in that room, and marring the enjoyment which he felt in Faith's presence. It was a relief when, saying, she would get old Abigail, the serving-maid, to accompany her for a walk to see the dames and gallants taking their barges to Richmond or Hampton, Esther tripped away. Looking back she saw that her jest had hurt her cousin, and that there was something very like a tear on her curled lashes. In a moment she was at her side, kissing her and saying:

"Pardon, dear Faith, pardon. I would bite my tongue out rather than really vex you. Kiss me, Fay."

Faith raised her face, which had been bent over her needlework, and their lips met, but she did not speak, and Esther, saying, "I take that kiss for forgiveness," disappeared. Faith made no further reference to Esther, and Louis, who was burning with indignation against her, did not trust himself to speak. After a few



moments Faith recovered her self-possession, and again began to ask questions about Clémence and Clarice and the old home in Picardy, which Louis was only too ready to answer, and thus prolong his visit indefinitely.

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## CHAPTER V.

## A HAPPY HOME.

JUNE, 1862.

The meeting of Lord Russell and his wife after the shortest separation was always like the meeting of lovers, and indeed, from the first to the last, they were lovers, to whom absence from each other was a pain, and meeting a keen and ever fresh delight.

It was late on the evening after Louis's visit to Southampton House, that Lady Russell, seated in the spacious room where her young kinsman had been introduced to her, started at the sound of a step in the corridor, and in another minute she was in her husband's arms.

"Welcome! Oh! welcome, dear heart!" she exclaimed, "a day earlier than I expected. Is all well at Woburn?"

"Ay, sweet one, though my father is troubling himself too much."

"On matters of State?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes."

"On your account, dear husband?"

"Nay, not more on mine than on a score of others; this hubbub raised in the City about the Lord Mayor is an ugly one. But," throwing himself on a sofa, and



drawing his wife close to him, he said, "let us forget things outside; do the children fare well?"

"Ah! do they not? Miss has got another letter ready, and she will now give it to her papa instead of placing it in mine, for mine was ready to despatch and," with a smile, "it was lost labour, you have taken me unawares."

"Unawares, but not unwelcome, is it not so, dear wife?"

"You know it," she said, "it needs no question."

"Miss Rachel must not usurp all our thoughts. How fares it with little Catherine, and as my good father would say, most weighty consideration of all, how fares it with our boy?"

"As heart can wish. They are all a-bed now, but when you have supped, we will visit our nurseries; though nurse has said I keep the girls from their beds too long, so I mean to amend my ways. When you are not here the children are my best solace. I think our boy grows daily liker to his father, and he has learned two words since you left him. Guess what those words are?"

"Sweet mother," Lord Russell said, laughing.

"Nay, *best father*—for it is well the boy should early learn that this best father is his possession. He sees his mother often, and thus he cannot forget her, and needs no reminder."

"It is good to have a home like this to resort to and forget awhile the pressure of affairs," Lord Russell said.

His wife laid her hand on his arm, and looking up into his face she thought she saw a shadow of anxiety there.



"Have you any care or fear, dear one, that I do not share?"

Lord Russell made no answer, but caressed the head which rested on his shoulder, as Lady Russell said:

"Do you remember when I sent you a letter, which you received in the House—written by me and beseeching you to refrain from taking part in a very strong and bitter opposition? Oh! my dearest, if that warning were needful then it is ten times more needful now. I pray you to be wary, for there are spies abroad and untrusty—friends—so called, to say nought of open enemies."

Lord Russell made no answer to this, but with a great effort he seemed to throw aside his grave mood and exclaimed:

"Is not supper served? I am ready for it."

At this moment a servant announced, "His reverence the Dean of Canterbury."

Lord Russell bade him hearty welcome and said:

"This is a lucky meeting, we are about to sit down to supper and you will join us—how fares it with you, good Dean?"

"Fairly well, my Lord, but these are not times when any man can carry about an easy unburdened heart." Then, seeing Lady Russell looking at him with anxious eyes, he said: "There is nothing new to tell, dear lady, it is only the old strife, and God knows, and He alone, how it will end."

"Now, good Dean," Lord Russell said, "we will address ourselves to our supper, to which I see we are summoned in the ante-chamber. Fortified with the



good cheer my wife always provides, we may then talk of vexations in a less dolorous tone. Take courage, Dean. God will protect the right."

The Dean bowed, and said, as he took Lady Russell's hand to lead her into the ante-chamber, at the door of which two lacqueys stood on either side of the tapestry, which they had drawn aside,—

"I thank you, my Lord, for calling to my mind the great consolation which can alone avail in these turbulent times, for truly God sitteth above the water-floods and remaineth a King for ever."

A very pleasant meal followed, and during it the Dean said, addressing Lady Russell:

"Has your ladyship yet spoken to my Lord about your young kinsman?"

"Nay, and I thank you for reminding me of my duty. It is concerning a young man, dear heart," she said to Lord Russell, "who needs a hand to help him to obtain a good position in some gentleman's household."

"You speak in riddles, Rachel. Who is this young man? Kinsman, does the Dean call him—what kinsman?"

"He is one Louis de Massué, of a younger and perhaps distant branch of the family of my good uncle the Marquis de Ruvigny."

"What brings him to this country?"

"Fear of persecution and poverty, dear husband. You know we have in safe keeping the letters of naturalisation committed to my care by my uncle."

"Why did he not include this kinsman?"

"Nay, I cannot say, but he sends him to me with



a commendatory letter, and he bore one also to our good Dean, who had acted a truly benevolent part to him already. He will tell you of him."

"He is, my Lord, a young man," the Dean hastened to say, "who enlisted my sympathy on his behalf. A good son to an ailing mother, and a kind brother to two young sisters, poor in purse, but anxious to earn for himself a living for their sakes. Louis de Massué is no adventurer, and, if I might venture to say so, I should think fully deserving of your help."

"Yes; and he is attractive in person and has a courtly bearing," Lady Russell said. "But the Dean has not told you what I know, that he has given the mother and sisters a shelter at Canterbury in one of the houses in the precincts, thus showing his good opinion of my kinsman."

"You are ever an earnest pleader, Rachel. Happy is the man who has you for a friend. The Dean will endorse this, I know," and then he added, with a smile, "and thrice happy the man who owns you as his wife. Well, I will think over this young Louis's requirements, but forsooth, the Court is no choice resort for anyone now. I must present myself there on the morrow and pay respects which I grudge. Respect!" Lord Russell repeated, "who can feel a shred of that quality left for those—"

"Hush, dear heart," Lady Russell said, "birds of the air carry a matter now. Let us repair to the nurseries and ask the Dean to accompany us. I know," she added, "it is no penance to you, dear Dean, to visit the children, for you have a true fatherly heart."



"Ay, Madam," Dr. Tillotson said, "but a sore one. May you be spared the pain of seeing a beloved child fading like a flower before your eyes."

Lady Russell pressed the hand she had taken in hers and said:

"Is your daughter no better?"

"No, nor ever will be, till she enters the heavenly inheritance of the saints," was the reply.

The two large chambers where the three children lay were dimly lighted, and a nurse was in charge in each of them.

In the first, the two girls lay in their curtained beds, and Lady Russell, taking a lamp from the hand of a servant, gently drew aside the curtain, shaded the light, and said:

"This is Rachel, Dean."

"Her mother's image," Lord Russell exclaimed. "Sweet miss, I will thank her to-morrow for her pretty letters. I would not wake her now, no, not even by a kiss."

"And here is Catherine," Lady Russell said, as she went to another bed, where the second girl lay in the profound slumber of childhood, her fair hair tucked away in a frilled nightcap, and her cheeks rosy with the heat of the curtained bed; for these were the days when fresh air was thought dangerous at night, and thick curtains and abundant clothing was the rule in all nurseries.

"Sweet Catty," her father murmured. "Give both your blessing, Dean."

Then the Dean raised his hand, and pronounced a blessing on the young sleepers in a voice broken with



emotion, for his last treasure was even then lying on the borderland of the last long sleep.

But now a loud cry was heard from the inner chamber that the nurse was trying in vain to quiet. Lady Russell hurried into the chamber, and, taking her boy from the nurse's arms, said:

"Peace, peace, my dear one. See, here is the 'Best father'—say 'Best father.'"

The little heir of the Bedfords, a rosy vigorous child of scarcely two years old, with his arms clasped tight round his mother's neck, was all smiles now.

"He heard voices, my lady," the nurse said in a somewhat aggrieved tone, "and he awoke in a fright—it is never well to let children be disturbed in their first sleep."

"You are right, good nurse," Lord Russell said; "but since he is awake give me my boy! See, Dean, he is a fine fellow," he continued, taking the child from his mother's arms and holding him in the somewhat awkward fashion, with which fathers handle their children in infancy.

"See," Lord Russell said, "what strong limbs he has, and what a handful to hold. I marvel, boy, that thy mother can dandle thee with such ease!"

The child was still looking at his mother, and, scarcely appreciating his father's nursing, tried to struggle to his feet, and held out his arms to Lady Russell.

"Say 'best father,'" she said; "come, be not wilful, dear boy, say 'Best father.'"

The child smiled archly and whispered, "Sweet mother."



"Well done, boy!" Lord Russell said laughing, "you know who comes first."

"Nay, nay," Lady Russell said, "I will not have it so. No, I will not have aught to do with you till you speak as I bid you."

The gentle voice was firm, and the child said, "Best father."

Then his mother caught him to her heart as he toddled towards her, stumbling on his long night-gown as he did so.

"Kneel, dear boy," she said, "kneel and clasp your hands thus. Now, good Dean, give him your blessing also."

"The Lord bless him and keep him," the Dean said, laying his hand on the boy's head, "the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon him and give him peace," adding, "and guide his feet in safe places till he comes to the journey's end."

The Dean and Lord Russell now returned from the nurseries, and Lady Russell was following, when her husband said:

"Dear heart, I would fain have a little private communing with our good Dean."

"It shall be as you desire," Lady Russell replied; "and I know our friend will give you good counsel."

There was a tone of sadness in her voice which the ear of love was quick to detect. Lord Russell turned, and as the Dean passed on, he put his arm round his wife, and kissing her, said:

"Be of good courage, Rachel, I will be wary—I know there are pitfalls, but I am not without a Guide."

"I trust you to that Guide," she said, and returned



to the room where Louis had seen her on the night of his arrival, and began a letter to her friend, Dr. Fitzwilliam, with whom, since the days of her girlhood, she had kept up a constant correspondence. He had been chaplain to her father, the Earl of Southampton, and was now Canon of Windsor. Lady Russell did not fail to mention her young kinsman, Louis de Massué, and begged him to do what he could to advance his interests.

This glimpse of domestic happiness which Dr. Tillotson had in the nurseries, filled his heart with thankfulness that, in the very midst of a corrupt society God had, as it were, a witness for all that was pure, lovely, and of good report in the household of Lord Russell.

Lady Russell was no recluse. She had a very large circle of friends and relatives with whom she had continual and affectionate intercourse. Nor did she neglect the duties of her rank because she was the best of wives and mothers. There was, as there can ever be, perfect harmony between the refinements of the gentlewoman of high position and the devoted and loving mother. At this time Lady Russell shone in the society of which she was an ornament. She was a woman of culture and refinement; but she was never too much engrossed with the world outside her, to forget the claims of that inner circle which is sacred to the heart of every wife and mother.

Louis de Massué found his *bourgeois* kinsfolk so much to his taste, that he began to be less anxious for the summons to Southampton House, which Richard



Cheeke told him he might expect when Lord Russell had anything to propose.

"I saw both my Lord and Lady Russell yesternight," Richard Cheeke was saying; "there was a goodly company to supper and I was bidden to fill a place. I heard you mentioned, and I expect you will have an interview with my lord to-morrow."

The two young men had met close to Whitehall. Louis had strolled in that direction without much purpose, and as he and Richard were talking together, there was a movement in the crowd of hangers-on which generally gathered near the Court when the King was there, and the Duke of York passed out attended by several gentlemen. He received no sign of applause, and yet his manner, as he bowed to those nearest to him, was courteous and winning.

"He is a handsomer man than the King," Richard Cheeke said, "but his Popery makes him obnoxious. There is a rumour that, failing to pass the Bill of Exclusion, they propose making the Prince of Orange Regent and the Duke, King only in name. A wild project which could only end in further turmoil and confusion."

Louis did not listen to what Richard said with much interest, and presently he rallied him on his moodiness.

"How are the *bourgeois* kinsfolk? Is aught amiss with them that you look so melancholy?"

"I am tired of dancing attendance on great folk who do not care a whit about me."

"Nay, now, there is no dancing attendance in the



case," Richard said. "This is Friday, and you only came to London on Tuesday—no time is lost."

"You forget, I leave my mother and sisters in Canterbury."

"No, I don't," Richard said laughing. "Come, no grumbling, and let us take a boat up the river. We shall see quality there, I warrant; the King will be disporting himself this fine morning with some of the women, and you shall tell me if on a sunshiny day old father Thames does not rival your sparkling Seine."

The two young men now turned into the Strand, and down Buckingham Street, and passing through York Gate, hired a small boat, rowed by a sunburnt waterman, who had plied his craft on "the silent highway" for many years. The bad condition of the streets and the ill-kept roads in the neighbourhood of London still made the river traffic considerable; although cumbrous coaches and other heavy vehicles were becoming more general than they had been before the Great Fire.

Presently the waterman drew his boat to the side of the river, and resting on his oars said:

"The King's barge is a-coming. They be going to make merry at Richmond, so they say."

The gaily decorated barge now came in sight, the people on the banks giving a few feeble cheers, while there was now and then a voice crying: "No Popery!" which evoked hisses and groans from the bystanders.

To look at Charles then, lounging on a cushioned seat covered with rich velvet, the Duchess of Portsmouth in gorgeous array at his side, it was hard to believe that he had a care or a thought beyond the



pleasure of the moment. He was laughing and jesting with his companion, and bowing, with the grace of which he was a consummate master, to the spectators.

The royal barges with attendants followed, strains of music floated on the water, pennons were flying and the ladies of the Court were in their full-dress finery, ogling the gallants who leaned over them, and returning their fulsome compliments with coarse jokes.

Louis de Massué looked at the pageant as it passed with grave earnest eyes. Such scenes were not new to him, for he had often been a witness of the revelry at the Court of the "*Grand Monarque*." Yet there was in this display something which jarred upon his more refined taste—a shameless disregard of the decencies of life in the eyes of the common people, who made such loud comments, that the waterman, with a broad grin, said to Richard Cheeke: "These fine folk lead a pretty loose life, which some of us poor folk would be sorry that our wives should see. Eh, master? Well, well, it can't last—it won't last, better days may be coming," and then the oars were plied vigorously again, and Richard pointed out any house or object of importance to Louis as they passed. On their return the banks of the river were less frequented. But in the well-kept gardens which sloped down to the banks, there were several groups of people, who were of the quieter sort, and came to feed the swans which flocked towards them in snowy companies.

"See! there is Master John Evelyn!" Richard Cheeke said, "he is a good man, a little too pious for me, but wondrous clever; his house at Wotton is full of curiosities, and he gets round him a bevy of clever men



—ay, and good women also. They are not all like those painted ladies we saw an hour ago.”

But Louis scarcely heard what his companion was saying, his eyes were riveted on a group standing on the stairs whence they had taken the boat and were now to leave it. Presently he started up.

“Have a care, young sir!” the waterman called out, “or you will get a ducking, and give us one also!”

The boat had scarcely touched the stairs, where a boy stood ready to catch the rope, when Louis leaped over the intervening space, and with flashing eyes laid his hand on the hilt of his sword.

“Let this gentlewoman pass,” he said, “or it will be the worse for you!”

“Ha! ha!” was the irritating retort. “Do you want her all to yourself? the city beauty of St. Paul’s Churchyard—I trow you are an impudent young varlet!”

“Louis, good cousin, I pray you tell this gentleman to forbear. He has continually followed me and Esther—we ought not to have come hither with only Abigail, but Esther would persist. “Nay, sir,” Faith said, “I will not enter any barge with you. Your company is not desired by me or my cousin.”

“Fetch him a box on the ear, Faith,” Esther said, “or I will do it for you—the wretch!”

“Peace, Esther, your words only incense him.”

The young gallant had possessed himself of Faith’s hand, and two of his boon companions endeavoured to prevent her from retracing her steps up the narrow passage where they stood. Richard Cheeke, who had been haggling with the waterman about the fare, now came up.



"For shame, FitzMorris," he said, "to persecute a helpless maiden. Be cool, Louis, be cool."

But Louis had now drawn his sword, and said in a voice of suppressed fury, "Let the gentlewoman pass, or, by Heaven, I will strike!"

"Gentlewoman! hear him"—the man exclaimed—"Old Jenkyns's daughter, who is nothing loth to use her as a bait to his customers. He loves his money, and would not risk the chances of selling a love token, if the buyer added a kiss to the bargain on those fair lips."

"You lie!" shouted Louis, now roused to uncontrollable indignation.

Richard Cheeke laid his hand on his arm. "Nay, you cannot fight here, in the presence of these women. Leave the girl alone, FitzMorris."

A terrible oath was the reply, as the man whom Richard called FitzMorris drew his sword, and the two men closed in a deadly conflict. It did not last long. Louis received a sword thrust which laid him on the ground, and his adversary, spurning him with his foot, said:

"You have got your deserts, you villain, and you may have your fair lady for all I care. Come," he said to his companions, "we have had enough of this. Let us be off!" and, in another moment, both men had sprung into the barge and were swiftly rowed away.

A number of people were now hastening to the spot, and Richard, who was kneeling by Louis, and endeavouring to staunch the blood which flowed freely, said, "Call a surgeon—he is in a deadly swoon."

Esther, with wild shrieks, had clung, beside herself



with fear, to the old servant; but Faith, though pale as death, did not lose her self-possession. She unfastened the kerchief which she wore under her mantle and, twisting it into a bandage, said:

"Tie this tight round above the wound."

"I cannot," Richard said, "he will die if no help comes."

Then Faith knelt down by Louis's side, and with her own hands did her utmost to staunch the crimson stream which poured forth. The sword had entered the leg just below the thigh, and it seemed but too likely that Louis de Massué would bleed to death. At last a doctor was seen making his way through the crowd. He had been summoned from Salisbury Court, and was well known as Dr. Edward Browne, the son of the great philosopher and eminent physician of the city of Norwich.

"Make way, make way," Dr. Browne said, as he pressed toward the place where Louis lay.

Although Dr. Edward Browne was the favourite physician of the nobility of his time, he was ever ready to help all who needed him, whatever their degree or circumstances. A surgeon followed him with a case of instruments and various potions.

The bleeding was soon staunched, and a few drops of cordial, which Dr. Browne himself put between Louis's lips, seemed to revive him.

"He must be taken home," Dr. Browne said, "and his wound more properly dealt with. Who is he? Ah! Richard Cheeke, is that you? Is this youngster a friend of yours? How did this happen? In fair fight?"

Then Faith spoke up in a low tremulous voice;



"May it please you, sir, the wounded man is my kinsman. He rescued me from the rude grasp of a gallant who was trying to force me to enter his barge. He has no home, sir, but my father's house is open to receive him."

"Poor child!" Dr. Browne said, laying a kindly hand on Faith's fair head, from which the hood had fallen back. "Poor child, it is a gruesome scene for you," and he looked compassionately at the little hands, which had been stained with blood in her efforts to staunch the wound. "We must get this poor fellow conveyed to your father's house. Where is it situated?"

"In St. Paul's Churchyard," Richard Cheeke now spoke. "This maiden is the daughter of one Jenkyns, a goldsmith and watchmaker."

"Ah! I know of him, a good man, though somewhat obstinate in his opinions. Who was the assailant?"

"I know him, sir," Richard Cheeke said. "Need I divulge his name?"

"If this poor boy dies, he will have to answer for it, that is very clear," Dr. Browne replied.

The surgeon was sent for a litter which was kept for emergencies of a like kind at a house near the river. Into this Louis was lifted, still but partly conscious and moaning heavily.

"My good friend, Master Dickson, will accompany you and do all that is needful for the wounded man. I will myself visit him ere the day is over, and I trust I may find him easier. Who is this?" Dr. Browne asked, as Esther cried and wept and said she alone was to blame. "Who is this?—make not so much ado,



child," he added. "See how your sister maintains a quiet demeanour."

"She is not my sister. I would fain come hither to feed the swans; she hated to come because of this wicked man haunting the river banks. Oh! if he dies I shall die also!"

"Tut, tut, child, it will be more to the purpose to hasten home and assist in needful preparations."

"Yes," Faith said, "let us go forward with Abigail, and it may be you, sir, will in your kindness bring him to my father's house."

"I am Richard Cheeke and your servant; command me, madam, as it please you, and be assured the life of this gallant young gentleman is dear to me also."

Faith bowed, gave one glance at the litter, drew her mantle closely round her, and then set out at a quick pace with the old servant Abigail and Esther towards St. Paul's.

The gaping, wondering crowd made way for her, and not one disrespectful word was said. A street brawl was no unusual thing, but the circumstances connected with this one, moved many of the bystanders to indignation.

The maiden who had been so ruthlessly persecuted by unwelcome attention was no gaily-dressed girl, flaunting her finery and courting notice. Faith bore about with her that shield of purity and modesty which ought to have been a defence against insults and familiarity.

"If it had been t'other one who is wailing and crying, I'd not have been amazed, but it must be a heart of stone not to be moved by the entreaty of this maid, to be suffered to go unmolested."



"Yes," was the rejoinder from another bystander; "it's a shame that these court gallants should go about waylaying decent damsels who, thank Heaven! know nought of the sin and evil in high places. Let 'em keep to their fine painted women bedizened with jewels and grand clothes, and leave humbler and more respectable folk alone."

"It's a pity that youngster got off as he did. I wish he'd been run through the body instead of t'other."

"Ay, ay! but, never fear, he'll catch his deserts some day!"

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## CHAPTER VI.

## A MEETING.

MADAME DE MASSUÉ and her two daughters were, by the kindness of the Dean, provided with a temporary home at Canterbury.

Clarice and her mother were continually wondering how long they should have to remain there; and poor Madame de Massué grew querulous and restless as day after day passed and there was no sign from Louis. For the hundredth time her daughters had to answer the question, "When will Louis return for us?" with the assurance, "He will come when he has found our uncle, mother, and made our future plain."

"So you say, but I am tired of waiting, and I cannot find pleasure in moping about these precincts and attending services, like Clémence. Then at night I lie awake listening for those cathedral chimes and counting the hours; this house is gloomy and *triste*. I remember, when your father took me to Amiens, it was the same—the big Church overshadowed me. If I had liked it he would have lived at Amiens, as some of our people were gathered there, but when he saw it made me sad he gave up the thought. Ah me! what a difference now! no one to care or to consult my pleasure."

"Oh, mother!" Clarice said, "it is not good of



you to say this when we make you our chief thought. Louis—”

“Yes, indeed, Louis, where is he? and what is he doing? It is hard to think he may have found my brother and never to let me know, or return to us.”

“He may return any day now,” Clarice said. “It would be of no avail if he came before he found our uncle, on whom your heart is so set. Why, I don’t know, for I daresay he is a rich *bourgeois*, who will be sorry, rather than glad, to have long-lost kinsfolk coming to him for help.”

“I want no help,” Madame de Massué said fretfully. “I only want a kind brother—to—” Tears now poured forth, which always provoked Clarice, and she said sharply:

“I see nothing to make you cry, mother. It would seem you forget how *triste* we may be in Canterbury, amongst strange folk. I don’t sit down and cry,” and then Clarice left the little, low-roofed parlour, where her mother sat disconsolately, and went to call Clémence.

Clémence was in the kitchen preparing a dainty dish to suit her mother’s appetite, for the *cuisine* of Mrs. Dunn, the woman in charge of the house, was not to her taste. At first Mrs. Dunn had resented the intrusion into the kitchen, but Clémence won her way, and very soon the good woman was lost in admiration, to observe how the clever fingers of the French maiden made little dainties out of nothing, always adding:

“It ain’t enow to fill a sparrow’s stomach. The butchers would have poor trade if all folk lived on those kickshaws.”

Clémence had just prepared a dish of lettuces and



cress sprinkled with oil and a little finely-minced cold capon on the top, well seasoned and flavoured, when Clarice came into the kitchen.

"Clémence, I pray you go to our mother. She is crying and grumbling because Louis does not return. I have been with her all the forenoon and I am weary of her—I mean of her questions and sighs and groans! *Pauvre petite maman!*"

Clémence was cutting some fine morsels from a huge wheaten loaf while her sister was speaking, and said:

"I must shred this into a dish first, and Mistress Dunn will put it on the fire. Sprinkle it with sugar and spice, Mistress Dunn, and pour milk over when it is boiling, and our dinner will be fit for a prince."

"Pity there's no princes to eat it. For my part I like summat that I can put my teeth into and chaw with a relish."

"Well," Clémence said, laughing, "this stout leg of the capon, and that manchet of brown bread, will suit you, Mistress Dunn. May you have good appetite!"

"I must wash it down with a cup of ale, an' it please you, mistress."

"As you will," Clémence said, as the two sisters left the kitchen, which was only separated from the parlour by a narrow passage.

"Confess, Clémence, it is strange Louis stays so long away."

"He has not been away a week."

"Indeed! you lose count of time. Is not this Thursday, and he left us on Monday in last week. Clémence, I believe you love to stay in this place; as for me, I want to fly far away over those big towers."



“And I,” said Clémence, “shall grieve to look my last on them. It is a new and beautiful life to me.”

There are some people to whom the presence of a great cathedral is at once an uplifting and an education. Clémence was one of these. The past had a charm for her, far exceeding anything that the present had as yet given her. The beautiful prayers of our Church, as she heard them first under the lofty roof of Canterbury Cathedral, were a revelation to her. They came with the force of novelty, and seemed to supply a want of which she had been conscious in the long drawn-out services of the little hidden conventicle in her father's old château.

When Clémence stood on the flight of steps which lead up to the choir of the Cathedral, and looked down at the spacious nave, her young heart was filled with emotion which could find no words. Yet more, when still ascending she found herself in the wide place at the east end of the choir, and looked upwards again to the altar, she felt stirring within her that spirit of prayer, and that sense of the unseen, which is granted to us all, perhaps, at rare intervals, but chiefly and most continually to the pure in heart. There were but scant congregations on week days in the Cathedral, and one more worshipper was always observed. Clémence had therefore attracted the attention of the Canon in residence, and he was pleased to discover that the old house in the precincts was occupied by so fair a vision, and he determined to persuade his lady to present herself at the door of Madame de Massué's little abode, to pay her respects to her, and her daughters.



The task was not so easy. Canon's wives were then quite aware of their dignities, and that having ascended so far on the ecclesiastical ladder, further upward steps might be expected. The Canon in question had not long been honoured with the preferment, and his wife and daughters put on the added dignity, which the good husband and father did not assume.

It was true in the seventeenth century as it is true in the nineteenth, that it needs a thoroughly simple and sincere nature not to be unduly elated by promotion, or depressed by neglect when another is preferred before us. To be modest when successful, and cheerful under failure, are signs of a nobleness and singleness of heart which, when met with, we rejoice in and admire, while we may regret it is so rare!

Clémence de Massué always lingered after the evensong in the Cathedral, and then walked round the precincts, that she might lay up a store of memories for the future, when she should have left Canterbury for ever. For her mother's growing discontent proved that she was hankering after a very different life, and that she was secretly indulging the hope that her visionary brother might lift her and her daughters into competence, if not affluence, and that they would go to London and find husbands ready for them. For surely the beauty of Clémence and the *esprit* and vivacity of Clarice would speedily effect conquests, it might be of the rich, and, better still, the noble!

Clémence was crossing the wide lawn from the Cathedral on the evening of the day that poor Madame de Massué's discontent had all but worn out the patience of both her children, when the Canon, who



had noticed her in church, stepped out of his way to meet her, and raising his hat he made a low bow.

"I have the pleasure of addressing the young lady who has done the Chapter the honour of taking up her abode in our house with the gables."

Clémence blushed at the sudden encounter, and said:

"We are, sir, by the kindness of the Dean suffered to live there till my brother returns from London. We daily expect him, and we marvel that he so long delays."

"If his return is like to deprive us of your presence, madam, we may hardly desire it. I see," he added, "that you take delight in our noble Church and the services."

Clémence's simple answer was like herself.

"Yes, sir, it is all a beautiful novelty to me."

"Ah! and doubtless that enhances the charm. We have many historic interests in our Cathedral. Kings and princes have frequented it. It was the scene of a proud man's fall and a king's humiliation. A nation wept when the body of a gallant prince was brought hither from France to be buried. And, forsooth, there is scarce a nook or corner which has not its story to tell. You have taken note of the Baptistry, which is, I may say, unique, and of the remains of the Monastery and ancient Hospital."

Clémence listened to these bare details of facts, which were rolled off the good Canon's tongue somewhat after the fashion of a lesson well learned, and then she said, with heightened colour:

"There have been, doubtless, sir, many saints, whose



names are forgot, who have prayed in this Church. I think much of them, and when I call them to mind there seems so little diversity. Is it not all one Faith: whether we are like my father — a Separatist — worshipping in a plain meeting-house, or one to whom the grand service of the old Church is dear?”

“A remarkable young woman!” the Canon thought. “The Dean has ever an eye for what is good, ay, and fair also—and—”

“Your pardon, sir; I am seeking a house in the precincts of the Cathedral—can you direct me thither?”

The speaker was a young man, who was evidently in some perplexity. His fine open countenance betrayed anxiety, and he looked somewhat travel-worn and weary.

“I will gladly give you the information you desire, sir,” the Canon said, acknowledging the young man’s respectful bow by removing his shovel hat an inch from his head; to lift it entirely would have endangered the safety of his full-bottomed wig.

“I seek a gentlewoman who is, as I take it, living in Canterbury with two daughters, in the house which is the property of the Dean—”

“*And Chapter,*” the Canon added. “Well, sir, you are somewhat fortunate. This young gentlewoman is the daughter of the lady whom you seek.”

Clémence, whose eyes had been fixed on the speaker, her heart filled with that prescience of evil tidings which comes to us we hardly know why, now said, “Madame de Massué is my mother, sir. Is it she whom you seek?”

Richard Cheeke now, for the first time, looked at



Clémence, and made the accustomed salutation with his cap in his hand.

"I do seek her, madam, and I fear me I bring her ill news."

"Ill news!—my brother—Louis!" Clémence clasped her hands as if in entreaty. "Oh! sir," she said, "what has befallen him?"

"He has been sorely wounded in a fight with a scoundrel—a villain!" Richard said. "He rushed to the rescue of a fair maiden who was beset by this man—swords were drawn, and your brother fell, while the chief aggressor took flight."

All the colour left Clémence's fair face, her lips moved, but no sound escaped them.

"She will swoon," the Canon said in real distress. "You have been too abrupt, sir, with your news—too sudden!"

"I have ridden hard from London to tell it, sir. I need scarce say I would sooner have ridden a thousand miles in another direction. It is no pleasant errand to be the bearer of evil tidings."

And now, as Clémence recovered herself with a great effort, she said:

"It is my mother, I think! How shall I break the news to her? Oh! it might kill her—weakly as she is!"

"There is yet hope of his life," Richard said. "The bleeding is staunch, and he may recover. Meantime, he is well cared for under the roof of a kinsman—one Master Jenkyns—at whose bidding I have arrived here to say, that if his mother and sisters desire to see him, they are welcome to his house."

Richard, as he spoke, was gazing with admiration



he could not conceal into Clémence's fair face. The light of the summer evening was upon it as, with her head a little raised, she looked up at the great towers above them, with an expression on her face Richard Cheeke never forgot. To his latest day he remembered that first meeting in the precincts of Canterbury, and then, as at many a future time, he felt as if Clémence belonged to a different world from that in which he had been passing his young manhood, careless and loving ease and pleasure, and with but little thought beyond the present and its enjoyments. Even at this moment he felt as if he were guilty of cruelty, in being the messenger of evil tidings to this sister of a man whom he had known but a few short days, but for whom he already felt a strong friendship, now mixed with grief at his critical condition.

"Well," the Canon said, "I must away, I fear, as a company of friends are bidden to sup with me. And I take it my presence, when the news is communicated to Madame de . . . ."—the Canon rather shirked the French name—"might be an intrusion. I will do myself the pleasure of inquiring for madame early on the morrow." Then the Canon bowed, and saying, "May your anxious care be soon relieved," he left Clémence with Richard.

"I would that the Dean were here," Clémence exclaimed. "He is all goodness and kindliness."

"Yes, but he is now in London, and has already visited your brother. Take courage, madam, your brother is a man who wins all hearts, and he has, let me assure you, friends ready to serve him. He is in the house of your kinsman, and tended with devotion



by his daughter, who, pardon me, testifies to the relationship, for she resembles you to an extraordinary degree."

If Clémence heard this she did not seem to heed it.

"We turn this way," she said. "The house is yonder;" then softly, as if to herself, she murmured: "Oh, Louis! Louis! how can I tell mother—*pauvre petite maman!*"

"Shall I retire and leave you to make the announcement, and wait till you summon me? I only desire to serve you and do what you deem best."

"Oh! you are very good, sir," Clémence said, raising her eyes to Richard's face. "Do I seem ungrateful? I would not have you think so ill of me as that!"

"I can never think aught but good of you, madam," Richard said, strangely moved by the perfect simplicity and rare beauty of this sister of Louis de Massué.

What is called love at first sight is not very common, though the counterfeit is common enough. But the recognition of some one who will be the good influence of life, whose beauty is the lasting beauty of the soul shining through the temporary loveliness of youth, this, once experienced, changes the whole course of life, wraps those who feel it in a new atmosphere, radiant with the hope of being worthy of the one whose love would be an uplifting towards higher and better aims and desires.

It was something like this which filled Richard Cheeke's heart as he saw Clémence run quickly towards a little gate opening into a small garden to meet her sister, whom she clasped in her arms, and then they both disappeared into the house.



Richard drew back out of sight, with a chivalrous sense of what was fitting, which did him honour.

"I will wait here till they have grown calmer," he thought. "They would not care for me, a stranger, to witness the first shock of grief. But how lovely is that sister of De Massué's—never before did I see a face such as hers. She is like the daughter of good old Jenkyns, yet unlike—what makes the difference? Nay, I cannot tell, but whatever it is, it makes *all* the difference to me!" And so Richard meditated as he paced up and down the Green Court, always turning sharply round as he neared the house with the gabled roof. Waiting and watching, and tired as he was with his ride on the bony, lean horse which Louis had hired from the Chequers Inn, hungry, too, for the supper Mistress Bunce had promised to have ready for him in half an hour—he never thought of leaving the precincts till he learned Clémence's pleasure.

At length, as the shadows deepened and the grand towers and roofs of the Cathedral took on the sombre hues of evening, Clémence came out of the garden, and looking right and left, saw Richard and came quickly towards him.

"It would satisfy my mother," she said, "to see you—to hear from your own lips all the truth. She fears we are deceiving her, and that Louis is dead. You would not deceive us, I know," Clémence said; "I can trust you."

"You do me much honour. If you trust me, the faith of the rest of the world is as nothing."

The words were spoken with passionate earnestness,



beyond what the occasion required, and Clémence replied quietly:

"It is good, sir, to be trusted by all, or rather, never to give occasion to be doubted by anyone."

Richard Cheeke had now to go through a severe test of his friendship for Louis. Poor Madame de Massué was wildly incoherent and distressed; insisting that her son was dead, and no one dare tell her, demanding to be taken to him at once, moaning and weeping and then breaking out into weak and vain regrets that she had ever set foot in England; trouble had haunted her ever since. She was miserable and desolate. "Oh! Louis, Louis!" she cried, "if I lose him I shall die! I must die!"

Her two poor children stood one on either side of her. Clarice trying a little scolding as she touched her mother's nose with a burnt feather and sprinkled vinegar on her forehead.

"Tell me the truth, sir," Madame de Massué exclaimed, "only the truth."

"Madame," Richard said, "I have told all I know. Your son is living, and under the best care with his kinsfolk. Your brother, Master Jenkyns, bids me say, if you desire to be near your son he will receive you under his roof, and these young gentlewomen also. A coach leaves the Chequers Inn early on the morrow. I return by it, and I will do my utmost to render your journey as little irksome as possible."

"I will go—I must go. Nay, Clarice, do not stop me. I will make preparations; we will all go!"

Madame de Massué started up, and then sank back again helplessly.



"My mother is in no condition for travel," Clarice said decidedly. "She must abide here with one of us, and the other must depart to London."

"We need not detain this gentleman any longer," Clémence said. "We seem to forget his fatigue, for he rode hard to bring the news from London. At what hour does the coach leave the Chequers, sir?" she inquired of Richard.

"At six o'clock, and may be expected, if no hindrances happen, to reach London in the evening."

"Then we will, if it please you, sir, say that one of us will be ready to start."

"All of us—all of us," Madame de Massué said. Then she turned an appealing glance on Richard. "Oh, sir," she said, "pardon the ravings of a distracted mother. My boy is my staff, my hope, my dear, only son. Pity me, sir, and do not take amiss my wild words."

Richard was touched in spite of himself. He bent one knee, took Madame de Massué's hand and kissed it, courtier-like, saying, "Let us hope, madame, your worst fears are groundless, and that your brave son may live to be your prop for many years."

Then Richard withdrew, Clarice following him.

"It will be impossible, sir, I am certain, for my poor mother to take this journey. She is very weak in health, and on our first arrival here she was so sick we had to call in a physician. And," Clarice said, her colour rising as she spoke, "we are very poor, and Louis bid us be very chary of spending what little money is left. I think Clémence must go, and leave me with our mother. I can manage her best. Clémence is too



sweet and soft, and cannot speak a sharp word. I can speak, perhaps, too many," Clarice said. "But oh, sir," she continued, as she stood with Richard at the gate, the sound of poor Madame de Massué's low crying, and Clémence's gentle, soothing voice heard from the open window of the parlour, "Oh, sir, it goes near to break my heart to think of Louis sorely wounded and far from us. Tell me, did he provoke the quarrel? He is ever too hot-tempered—he knows it, and has said often his rage is at times like a fiery steed, he has much ado to hold in."

"On this occasion, madam," Richard said, "the provocation was on the miscreant's side, whose sword has worked such trouble for you and your mother. Your brother went to the rescue of (as I think she is) your cousin, who was persecuted by a villain. His deed was justified in defence of a maiden who had no protector, and none can blame him, rather admire his courage and zeal in a good cause."

"Dear Louis, dear best of brothers! Sure, God will spare him to us, for we shall be desolate indeed without him."

"I think you may hope rather than fear for the result," Richard said. And then, with a low bow and "I wish you good evening, madam," Richard pursued his way to the Chequers Inn.

Mistress Bunce was as good as her word. An excellent supper was ready for Richard, and the large tankard of her best strong ale suited her guest's taste, though it had been declined by Louis on a former occasion.

Richard Cheeke, moreover, did not at all object to



have his meal seasoned with a little of Mistress Bunce's gossip, and she was pleased to be able to describe to him the arrival of the French ladies, and the visit of the Dean, with other particulars about the doctor she had summoned, to whom the young gentleman showed at first but scant civility. "I'd as lief have kept them here," Mistress Bunce said; "but, no doubt, they were glad, poor things, to get shelter in a house free of cost. I don't complain of the young gentleman, though he was high and mighty—beggars must needs not be choosers—and if he wanted to save my charges, well-a-day, he was welcome. But mercy! what cooking they'll get from old Mistress Dunn! She could no more make a decent pasty than she could fly—not that this is much odds to them, for they all eat in a mincing way, as if the food was scarce good enough for them. They are a pretty pair of sisters, to be sure. The eldest of the two is too sweet and winsome for this world. And she just doats on the poor lady, her mother. She was enough to wear out the patience of fifty Jobs while she bided here, but never a cross word did Mistress Clemmy speak. T'other could speak up sharp sometimes, like her brother. But there! we can't all be angels, as I tell Bunce when I've had a quarrel with him and have to make it up, and maybe have called the poor man what he is—bless him!—a coward, who can't stand up for his rights."

"You do that for him, Mistress Bunce," Richard said.

"I'll warrant I do; and I tell you what, master, in this world those that go into the corner may keep there. I hope the young gentleman will get well of his wound



for his sisters' sake—let alone his poor ailing mother. He is no angel, or I'm mistaken," Mistress Bunce said, laughing. "Lor', how his eyes flash like sparks out of a log when he is put out. Still, I'll allow he is as pretty a young gallant as ever darkened the doors of the Chequers Inn—present company excepted, sir!"

Richard accepted the compliment with a laugh, and then told Mistress Bunce that he should leave by the stage the next morning, and would pay his score, and for the hire of the horse on which Louis had ridden up to London, and which Richard had taken for his journey to Canterbury the preceding day.

"It may be," Richard said, "that the gentlewomen from the precincts may accompany me, but I shall be astir early, and I will go and inquire if they all need seats. The stage starts from here, I think?"

"Yes, sir, twice every week, and you are lucky to hit the right day. But, dear heart! if you have poor madame to look after, I pity you. She will cry and swoon and grumble all the time. You should have seen her when they lugged her out of the Dover stage! More dead than alive!"

Richard inwardly hoped Madame de Massué would be persuaded to remain in Canterbury, but he did not say as much to Mistress Bunce.

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## CHAPTER VII.

## VIA MEDIA.

LOUIS DE MASSUÉ lay with very little sign of life for some hours. They had made a bed for him in the spacious room which the goldsmith's family generally occupied, for the surgeon said it would be dangerous to attempt to move him to a higher storey till the fear of a return of the bleeding from the wound was at an end. Here Dr. Edward Browne visited him and gave hope of his recovery. The surgeon, who had been also on the spot when Louis lay on the stairs by the river, followed all his instructions, and very slowly Louis de Massué returned to life and consciousness.

It was on the afternoon of the day when Richard Cheeke had met Clémence in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral, that Louis turned his head towards the deep bay window where Faith sat, and said:

"Is it you, Clémence?"

Faith left her needlework, and coming to the bed, said:

"No, it is your cousin, Faith Jenkyns, for whom you caught this bad wound."

"Ah! I remember," Louis said.

And now Esther, hearing voices, came from the inner room, and kneeling down by the bed said, as Faith tried to prevent her:



"Oh, thank God you can speak! Yes, Faith, I will tell him how I have prayed he might live, brave and good as he is."

"Peace, Esther. See, he cannot bear much."

But Louis stretched out his hand, and laying it on Esther's head said, in a low voice:

"Go on with your prayers, child, for I need them."

"I am not a child—I am sixteen. I—"

But Faith put her arm round the slight figure, and calling Abigail, bid her take Esther away, for the room must be kept quiet. Poor little Esther went away weeping; brought face to face with the realities of suffering, and it might be death, the mischievous child, full of pranks and sauciness, seemed to have disappeared, and a sorrowful maiden taken her place.

Faith now administered the cordial ordered by Dr. Edward Browne, and then she shaded the bed with a curtain which had been fastened up to protect it from observation and from the light, and said gently:

"You must sleep now; and then, awaking refreshed, you shall have the posset again you thought so good at noon."

Louis closed his eyes; then, with a smile on his lips, he said:

"All is good that you give me."

Faith closed the curtain and returned to her seat in the window. She did not resume her needlework, but leaned against the thick mullion of the casement thinking of that day, now it seemed to her long, long ago, when she had watched Louis as he slowly strolled along the square. So gallant, and so full of life—and now lying there but a ghost of his former self—and for her



sake. There was mingled sweetness and sadness in the thought, which brought a tear to her eyes and a smile to her lips at the same time.

Presently a step was heard on the stairs. Faith moved softly to the door, and opening it, looked out. Her cousin was standing on the last step of the staircase, his hand on the thick bannister.

"What is it, Edward?"

"There are folk below who would fain see Louis—grand folk. You had best come down." Then Edward, looking earnestly into Faith's face, said: "You will kill yourself tending this cousin. You would not do the same for me."

"Would I not? Wait till you are thrust through with a sword for my sake," Faith said. "I will come anon, but first I must give Abigail warning to take my place in Louis's chamber."

Having summoned Abigail, Faith went down to the shop. Her father was there, engaged in earnest conversation with a lady, and Faith waited till she turned towards her.

"Is this your daughter, Master Jenkyns?" Lady Russell said—and then, with the gracious sweetness that always characterised her, she said, "We have a young kinsman, methinks, lying sore wounded under your care—is it not so?"

"Speak, child," her father said. "Pay your respects to this lady. She is Lady Russell, and does us much honour to come hither."

Faith was never very ready with words, but she curtseyed, and said, in her gentle, musical voice:

"Louis de Massué lies sick upstairs. He is my



father's nephew. Would your ladyship wish to see him?"

"Indeed, I would fain look on him, if you think it will do him no harm. Dr. Edward Browne has given me a good report to-day."

"Louis is sleeping now," Faith said; "but he may awake ere long. Will it please you to await his wakening, or return at another time?"

Lady Russell was fascinated by the perfect ease of manner in the goldsmith's daughter. But few of the high-born damsels with whom she had constant intercourse rivalled her. So true it is, that good manners are not put on and taken off, like a glove, to suit the occasion, but are the outcome of a refined nature, striking its roots deep in love to God and man. The signs of this love are never to be mistaken for the mere gloss which but covers the base metal beneath, and will wear off with the friction which only makes the real gold shine the brighter, and testifies to its inherent value.

Two lacqueys in attendance outside Master Jenkyns's shop, with the badge of the Russells on their sleeves, did not attract more than a casual observation from many of the passers-by. The goldsmith's shop was often frequented by the wives and daughters of noblemen, with whom, as I have said, Master Jenkyns transacted business—exchanging jewels or re-setting them, or furnishing silver tankards or timepieces. The goldsmith was known to be one of the most strenuous opposers of the Court party in the late struggle, and he had boldly avowed himself on the side of liberty, protesting against packed juries, and the delivery of the



ancient charters into the hands of an unscrupulous king.

Lord Russell was already marked as a fervent supporter of the Exclusion Bill, and one of the foremost of the men who were determined to prevent, if it were possible, the return of the Roman Catholics to power.

This, then, was a reason ready to hand for suspecting that Lady Russell's visit to Master Jenkyns was one that had a significant meaning. Two men, who seemed to be carelessly strolling up and down St. Paul's Churchyard, staring at the city maidens, and apparently with no particular object in view were really on the alert, and one of these men was a wine merchant named Shepherd, whose wine vaults were much frequented by the gentlemen of the time, ostensibly to taste the wines, but really to talk over certain affairs which it was thought could be safely discussed in the retirement of Shepherd's vaults.

"There is a fish to catch there," one of the men, named Rumsey, said, "if only we could throw the right bait."

"Ay," replied Shepherd, "but it is ill-advised to cast a line over a barren pool—leastways, we may watch and wait, that does no harm."

"You are always cautious, Shepherd. You are thinking of your customers, and the risk that your trade may fall off and your casks rot in your vaults. Well, well, every man must look after his own interests, and swear black is white to promote them, eh, good Master Shepherd?"

"You may swear what you choose," was the reply; "it's no odds to me."



Rumsey laughed.

"Well, I shall note what I have seen to-day. You must be a fool not to see that there is a good reason for my 'nameless lord' to strengthen his hands with city malcontents. So good-day to you, Master Shepherd."

While this conversation had been carried on outside Master Jenkyns's shop, Lady Russell had taken Faith aside into a small room, beyond the ticking of the clocks, and had learned from her all the particulars of Louis's condition. Faith gave the account of all that had happened clearly and in a few words, and, with heightened colour, said:

"It lies heavy upon me, madam, that all this ill to my kinsman is due to me. I can never make him amends, for he will be too weak for many a day to take any office in a nobleman's household, and I know, for the sake of his mother, he would fain have done this. Master Cheeke is gone with the ill news to Canterbury, and my father will take under his roof his sisters and my aunt also, if they will to come."

"Richard Cheeke is a trusty messenger," Lady Russell said, "and I bid him bring me early tidings on his return of how it fared with the poor mother. For, loving as sisters may be, it is the mother for whom I fear most. I have a little son," Lady Russell added with a smile, "and my mother's heart tells me what pain would be mine if evil befel him." Then, after a momentary pause, Lady Russell said: "It is but a slender thread by which we hold our beloved ones. Thinking how soon that thread may snap asunder should make us take heed that we look to make sure



of a place beyond this life, where there are no fears of parting or loss. Is it not so, dear child?"

Faith's response was so earnest that Lady Russell said:

"We have a common bond of union in the Faith of Christ," and again the question—"Is it not so?"

Faith's lovely eyes were full of tenderness as she said:

"Yes, madam, I desire to hold that faith steadfast."

Then Faith conducted Lady Russell to the upper chamber, where Abigail was keeping guard, Esther having coaxed her to let her share her watch.

"Alas! poor boy," Lady Russell said, as Faith drew aside the curtain, "he is so greatly changed, I should scarce know him."

The words, spoken in a low tone, did not rouse the sleeper. Louis lay so still that, except for the gentle movement of his faint breathing, he might have been in his last long sleep. His hair was tossed back from his brow in heavy masses, and one arm lay across his breast, while the other was stretched out so that the hand hung over the edge of the bed. There was not a vestige of colour on his lips or cheeks, and his features might have been chiselled in marble. Lady Russell pressed her lips upon the hand which had been so swift to handle a sword in defence of the girl who stood by, and turning to her said, as the curtain fell:

"Is there aught I can do for his solace and comfort? Command me if my services can be of any avail."

"We can provide all he needs, madam," Faith said. "But it may be when he is stronger he may crave to



see you. I will send a messenger to you if so it should prove."

"Do so, to Southampton House. We remain there for a time, and Richard Cheeke will give me tidings as to what he found at Canterbury, and what he has done for the poor mother."

When Lady Russell had left the room, followed by Faith, Esther, who had hidden behind the tapestry, crept out, and throwing herself on her knees by Abigail, she cried:

"They pity his mother, they pity his sisters—ay, and they pity Faith. Will no one pity poor me—and—and—I love him!"

"Peace, child, nor talk folly like that—fie for shame! What is the world coming to if lasses—nay, chits—like you speak of loving a fine gentleman who scarce knows whether they be here or there!"

Esther cried no more. She raised herself and stood erect, brushing away the tears from her face, and with a flash of her dark eyes, she said:

"What is the world coming to, prythee, when an old serving-woman can speak thus to me? Fie on you, Abigail; you shall repent this."

"Peace, I say, or you'll rouse the sick man by your folly, and maybe kill him—that'll be a fine proof of love, won't it? You little hussy!"

This consideration seemed to take the effect which Abigail's former words had failed to produce. Esther went quietly out of the room, and climbing the narrow stairs which led to the upper chambers of the house, she opened the casement; and leaning both arms on



the sill, she buried her face in them and wept the hot tears of injured pride and mortification.

The Earl of Bedford's mansion in the Strand was a meeting-place for the members both of his own family and that of Lord Southampton. On the day after Lady Russell's visit to Master Jenkyns's shop the Earl had entertained a large company at dinner. The party had now broken up; some strolled into the garden, some repaired to Whitehall, where the King was holding his Court at this time, while some of the older guests sat down to games of cards and backgammon, which were interspersed with the gossip of the day; and two or three young couples had seated themselves in the deep, oriel windows, secure, as they thought, from observation, and exchanging those little pleasantries in which lovers of all ages delight.

Never had Lady Russell appeared to greater advantage. She had cast off the anxiety which had of late oppressed her, as rumours of growing discontent and threatened plots reached her ears. But now Lord Russell was with her and his children, and bent on dispensing his father's hospitalities to his guests, gay and happy as she had ever seen him, her heart seemed lightened of a burden, and she was as bright and cheerful as he was. Her sister, Lady Elizabeth Noel, watched her, as she moved about amongst her relatives and cousins, with the pride in her which she always felt. If there was uneasiness also, in her heart, she told herself she would not let her sister have any suspicion of it on this occasion.

The two little girls were presented to their various kinsfolk, and little Rachel, with her wise remarks, and



Catherine, with her winning manners, excited much admiration. Then the heir of the house of Bedford was brought in by his nurse, and his sturdy limbs praised, and the shyness which made him cling persistently to his mother, and hide his face in her gown, excused.

"It is ever so with boys," one lady said. "The girls are more ready to trust flatterers."

"Nay, I would not have that said," for Lady Russell saw that her little Rachel's ears and eyes were opened to everything that was passing. "We love not flatterers, for they often spread a net for our feet."

"To catch us, mother?" Rachel asked, "and never let us loose? I should not love to be caught therein."

"What amazing wit! what wondrous intelligence!" the same lady exclaimed. "Sure, Lady Russell, you have a prodigy in this child."

Rachel was beginning to question what "prodigy" meant, when her mother said:

"See, Rachel, nurse would fain order little master to his bed. Take one hand, and you, Catherine, the other, and guide him safe down the room to where nurse awaits him. And so farewell, my sweet ones."

As the boy toddled away, a sister on either side, his mother watched them with loving eyes.

"He has only lately felt his feet. He is so heavy, we would not hasten him to use them," she said. "I would my lord could see him now—ah!" for the little Wriothsesley stumbled in his long gown—a richly-embroidered and cumbrous garment for a child of two years old—and his sisters could scarcely set him on his legs again.

But all three laughed merrily, a peal of natural,



childish laughter, and then under the care of a nurse, and two other servants, they disappeared, to be conveyed to Southampton House by their faithful attendants.

Lady Elizabeth Noel had turned away to hide the sadness she could not repress. She loved her sister Rachel with the tenderness of a mother, for she had comforted her in the days of her early widowhood, and had, indeed, cared for her all her life. Perhaps she knew more of the dangers which beset what was known as "the country party" than Lady Russell, and she had many times sounded a note of warning. To-day, as has been said, she had refrained from touching on any painful subject. The happiness of her sister seemed so perfect, and she said to herself as she looked at her:

"God grant it may last!"

But Lady Russell was always quick to read the faces of those she loved.

"What is it, Betty?" she said, putting her arm into her sister's. "Have you anything on your mind you would fain tell me?"

"I have naught that is definite, dear heart," Lady Elizabeth replied; "only I pray you to do all you can to moderate your lord's bitterness against the Court. Pitfalls are dug for many honest men; false swearing is the rule, it seems, and bribes and corrupt dealing are rife on all hands. You remember, Rachel, how I warned you four years ago when William supported the Bill of Exclusion in the Commons. Since then more—not less—do you need my caution. Let that suffice on the word of a sister who loves you well. If a miscreant like Oates could hatch a plot as one might hatch a



cockatrice's egg, and the foul contents be nursed by evil men till the innocent suffered by their machinations, another like plot may be pretended with equal ease, having its foundation in lies and treachery, and may cost the lives of other noble men, and destroy the happiness of many a home."

Lady Russell was silent for a moment, laying her head against her sister's shoulder, and pressing the hand that was locked in hers. Presently she said:

"You mean well, dearest Betty; you speak out of love, but my dear lord has a brave spirit, and I, his proud wife, have tried to foster the same. I would ten thousand times rather that William should stand firm for the right and freedom of conscience, than that he should be a craven who would give up through fear the cause he believes in God to be just and good. But a truce to evil forebodings! God will protect the right, and be a sun and shield to those who fight for it."

Lady Russell's face kindled with enthusiasm as she spoke; and Lady Elizabeth Noel could not find it in her heart to say more of discouragement then; but, as her sister left her to meet her husband, who had come to conduct her to bid farewell to the Earl, and she noticed the radiant smile of greeting on both faces, she murmured:

"Dear child! Happy in the love of her noble husband. God in His mercy grant that they may be spared to one another for many years! I would not cast a shadow over her bright life; but William is a creature of impulse and enthusiasm, and I do not regret my note of warning, for the peril of these times is great."



On the following day Richard Cheeke asked for an audience of Lady Russell. He found her with the Dean of Canterbury in very earnest conversation, and he was about to retire when Lady Russell said:

"Nay, my good friend, the Dean will be as glad to heart the result of your errand to Canterbury as I am. We will put aside graver topics till we have your news of my poor young kinsman and of his mother."

"Madam," Richard said, "I found it impossible to bring Madame de Massué hither. She is a feeble person, methinks, at all times, and her daughters advised her remaining in the house which you, sir," Richard said, bowing to the Dean, "have granted for her use."

"Poor woman! Was she then so overcome by your tidings?"

"Painfully overcome, madam; but I have conducted one of Louis de Massué's sisters hither and she is now with him in her uncle's house—the goldsmith, Master Jenkyns."

The Dean laughed at this information, saying:

"I was before you this morning, Master Cheeke, and visited the goldsmith's abode ere you were stirring, I suspect. I have seen the sister of whom you speak, and I think you showed true wisdom in bringing her to her brother's side. She is exceeding fair, and full of sound discretion. Methinks she will be as medicine to heal her brother's sickness, though it might be that the hand of the goldsmith's daughter has already administered the like. You agree with me, Master Richard, in praising Mistress Clémence?"

Richard's face flushed crimson, but he tried to answer carelessly.



"Both sisters are handsome, sir, and both seem to have good sense—unlike their mother," he added. "I confess I slept late, for I had a hard day's riding to Canterbury, and a hard day's jolting and rumbling on my return in the stage. Our journey was long and toilsome. We did not reach London till near midnight, and, having conducted Mistress Clémence to her uncle's house, I resorted to my chambers in the Temple and slept like a dormouse in a hole."

"And you were right, Richard," Lady Russell said. "Now it is near noon, and the Dean honours me with his presence at dinner. Stay also, and you will be heartily welcome."

But Richard declined the invitation. He had not yet seen Clémence, and he was feverishly anxious to do so.

"The young man is doing well, I find," the Dean said. "I paid him a visit this morning, and it seemed to his edification, poor youth. I am returning to Canterbury after Sunday, when I must discharge the thankless duty of preaching before the King, and I will do my best to console the mother, and I trust shall do so effectually, by taking good news of her son."

"You are very considerate, sir," Richard said, "and your goodness is duly prized by those whom you have benefited."

Soon after Richard took a respectful leave of the Dean and Lady Russell, and went out into the crowded thoroughfare of the busy city, where the affairs of the Church and nation were the universal topics, like a man in a dream. What was anything to him now



when put in the balance with Clémence? Every word she had spoken was treasured and rehearsed again and again; all her gentle patience during the long journey, all her quiet endurance of the manifold discomforts, and, above all, her sweet assurance at parting that she should never forget his kindness, when, just as the clocks struck midnight, he had left her in the charge of her uncle, who drew back bolts and bars to admit his niece and bid her welcome to his house.

"Poor Richard," Lady Russell said, when he had left the room, "he looks weary and strangely unlike himself."

"He has sown a good crop of wild oats, madam, as I have heard from his father, Sir Thomas, and maybe he is now finding out that the harvest is bitter."

"There is somewhat very attractive in him, poor boy," Lady Russell said. "He is full of kindness and good nature, and has good parts if only he would make use of them, though I well know, Dean, that he wants the strong sense of duty to God and man which religion only can give. But to resume our conversation where we broke off. Have you learned aught in London, since you came to town, which causes you more uneasiness?"

"Scarce more than I felt before, madam. I am at times ready to cry, with the Psalmist, of many who speak fair to the face and foul to the back: 'Their mouth is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongues.' My enemies do not spare me, and I am accused of time-serving by some, and of liberality, touching the bounds of licence, by others. Even my friends



do not spare me. My valued and good friend, Mr. Nelson of Dryfield, wrote to inquire if truly I had done so much for the spoliation of Canterbury Cathedral. God forbid! I did but order the removal of the sun on the screen behind the Communion Table, which change was so insignificant that it made no noise, nor was it noticed till some days had passed. The Table itself is left untouched, nor would I in any wise pull down or destroy fair ornaments which tend to the due worship of the Lord in the beauty of holiness. All Popish innovations, I need not tell your ladyship, I do heartily abhor."

The Dean spoke with some heat. He had taken up a position in the Church which is ever difficult to maintain with dignity, and it is certain to be assailed by those holding extreme doctrines on both sides. This "via media" must ever lay those who walk in it open to suspicion. There is too much on the side of ritual for some, too little for others. But Tillotson, as far as any man could, strove to act conscientiously in the difficult days in which he lived, and if now and again the judgment of us, who look back from the vantage ground of two hundred years, may be against him, yet, with our partial knowledge of the dangers and vexations of those days of oppression, and of subtle and open attacks made on Christian verities, we may well honour Tillotson for what he was, and deal leniently with him for what he was not.

He was a favourite with the King, and a popular man wherever he went. His kindliness and readiness to help all who needed him, his genial temper and social qualities, brought him many friends, while his



learning and ability as a preacher marked him out as one who deserved a high place in the Church.

Amongst his closest friends he reckoned Lord and Lady Russell, and it was with an uneasy foreboding that he heard his host speak freely, at the board where he was a guest, of those matters which were now the main cause of the discontent in the city. Lord Russell denounced the Mayor, and called him a craven-hearted fellow. He inveighed in no measured terms against the usurping of the City Charters, and spoke, with the eloquence of which he was a master, of the shameful attempt thus to infringe the liberty of the subject.

"I am prepared to resist such tyranny to my latest breath," he said.

"Resistance against kingly authority," the Dean replied, "is scarcely countenanced in Holy Scripture, my Lord."

"I am speaking of moral force, Dean. I have no designs against the King's person—nay, I only deplore that I cannot render him in all matters the allegiance of a faithful servant. But I cannot, and I will not, sit calmly by and see the liberties of my country wrested from it. I will oppose with all my might the scheme of permitting a Roman Catholic sovereign to succeed to the throne of this realm."

"May God avert such a calamity, my Lord," the Dean said, "and give us all patience and faith. I would say to you, my Lord, as I said to my good friend Beveridge, who had scruples as to assisting our poor persecuted Protestant brethren who escaped from France, because forsooth he did not see eye to eye with them



in all matters of Faith, 'Doctor, doctor, charity is above rubrics.' "

When the Dean left Southampton House he attended at Whitehall, where, as he was making his way through the throng of people collected in the outer courts, he was touched on the shoulder by a gentleman usher, who said His Majesty desired to see him in his closet.

The Dean passed on his way through the gallery, and presently came upon His Majesty, who, with a bevy of attendants, was going to visit the Duchess of Portsmouth in her robing-room, which opened from her bedroom. The King, seeing the Dean, exclaimed:

"Ah! good Dr. Tillotson—a word with you in private. But first accompany me to pay your respects to my lady in her bower."

"I crave pardon, sir," the Dean said, "but I would ask permission to await your pleasure without."

"Nay, now, what qualms are these?" Charles said, laughing. "But, as you will!" Then, turning to one of the ushers, he said in a voice which had a touch of irritation in it: "Conduct the Dean of Canterbury to my private apartment, where he must await my pleasure—it may be for an hour or more—and you will have leisure, Mr. Dean, to meditate on the sermon you propose to deliver on Sunday in my ears, and add thereto a homily on the sins of the nation in general, and of their sovereign in particular."

Charles had in his arms, as he spoke, one of the little spaniels which he often bestowed on his favourite ladies as a precious gift. As he stood there in his rich



suit, with ruffles of almost priceless lace at his throat and wrists, his bold black eyes were fastened on the Dean with anything but a kindly expression. The Dean understood perfectly that his refusal to visit the Duchess was resented, and he pursued his way to the private apartments of the King somewhat disturbed in mind—at the same time satisfied that he had done what was right, and that he was bound to make a protest against the King's shameless immorality. Yet the good Dean was a lover of peace, and in his heart a zealous adherent of the reigning house; and he waited in some perturbation of spirit for the coming of the King.

Charles was as good as his word, and had prolonged his visit to the Duchess for more than an hour, when he came into the closet where he received those whom he wished to see in private. There was no trace of anger left, and dismissing the attendants with a wave of his hand, he threw himself in an easy attitude on a divan covered with rich velvet, and said:

"You are on a friendly footing with Lord Russell. Is it not so, good Dean?"

"It is so, sir, and I can assure your Majesty that he is a gentleman of whose friendship I am proud."

"Let him and my Lord Shaftesbury have a care," Charles said. "Rumours reach my ears that they are aiding and abetting treason against my person."

"Nay, sir," the Dean said, "do not heed idle rumour. Have we not had a lesson against doing so in the burst bubble of the infamous Popish plot?"

"Well, I do but warn you, Mr. Dean, that there may be danger to those who, forsooth, do their best to



cross my will. Think you I forget who pressed the Bill of Exclusion? Do I not know that these fellows who call themselves the country party are setting my authority at defiance? Wherefore, sir, all this hubbub about the charters of [this city and other cities in my realm? I will be master of the charters as well as of the people; I will have submission; and I would have my Lord Russell to know, that my dear and loving brother is heir to the crown of England, and his children after him. Come, I am dealing honestly with you, Dean, so let us have no misunderstandings hereafter."

"Sir," the Dean said, "I am your Majesty's loyal servant, and will be to the end of my life, but I humbly urge on you to judge no man from hearsay, for lies are whispered about, which tongues are only too swift to repeat. I may respectfully entreat you to believe that Lord Russell is a good Christian subject, and that his opposition is directed, not at your Majesty's royal house, but only and solely against such measures which smack of oppression in matters affecting the religion and prosperity of the kingdom."

"Enough!" Charles said, yawning. He hated long discussions, and was always glad to put aside disagreeable subjects to a more convenient season. "And now, good Dean," he went on, as he stroked the silken ears of the dog nestling in his velvet surtout, "say your say on Sunday and do not fear. I warrant I shall be asleep after the first five minutes, and thus you need not stickle at any strictures you may see fit to make on morals, and so forth. Words break no bones, certes not mine, for they are hard enough to



bear a hailstorm of admonition. I wish you good-day, good Dean."

The Dean retired, feeling humbled at his failure to make any impression on the King, whom, as he left the room, he heard break into a peal of laughter with the gentleman who had been in waiting outside the door, and entered the closet as the Dean left it.

"What now, good friend?" asked a jovial personage against whom the Dean jostled, as he was hastily making his way to the head of the principal staircase. "You look full of care, Dean. What weighs you down thus?"

"What must needs weigh down all those who hold office in Church or State at this time, brother Burnet."

"Ay, you are right there, but it is ill advised to wear one's fears on one's sleeve—it is better to maintain a cheerful demeanour. I would fain attend you to your house, if it please you, for a little conversation, touching some matters of which it is not prudent to discourse with any chance of eavesdroppers."

The two divines left Whitehall together, Burnet with a jocund air, returning salutations and exchanging greetings with due respect to persons; for Burnet, like some others of his time and of our time also, had a gradation of greetings according to the quality of those he noticed. A smile and pleasant word for one, a humble obeisance for another, a short "good-morrow" for less distinguished acquaintances, and a haughty, indifferent word to those whom he wished to understand



that he did not greatly covet their acquaintance. Pleasant, chatty, kindly Burnet, sailing easily with the tide, has left a picture of himself wherein *the man* peeps out in almost every page of the author's *History of His Own Times*.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## GREAT CHANGES.

It was a dull day in the latter end of September of the same year 1682, and Louis de Massué, now entirely recovered from his wound, was anxiously expected at the goldsmith's house by his sister Clémence and his cousin Faith. Louis had been summoned to an interview with Lord Russell on that morning, and the letter, which had been brought to him by one of the Bedford servants, implied that the business was of great importance.

"Lord Russell has at last fulfilled his promise," Clémence said, "and doubtless he will have found some gentleman willing to accept Louis as secretary, or interpreter of French, in his household. It is time," Clémence continued, "that we left this house; such goodness as we have received here can never be repaid, and," she added, "never forgotten. Yet I know there are some here who would fain we were gone—it is too apparent."

Faith had not spoken yet. Her head was bent over her work, while a book lay open beside her, from which she was learning by heart a stanza from the "Fairy Queen." Now she raised her eyes, and looking at Clémence, said:

"It is not well to judge all by one. Poor Edward



is, I know, apt to be rough in speech—but be pitiful to him.”

“Pitiful! Nay, I am not wanting in pity, but I feel we have outstayed our welcome from him, and perhaps—from our uncle also.”

“Nay, that is unkind. My father has been so ready to help. If he, too, is somewhat moody and short in his answers, it is that the aspect of the affairs of this city and country get worse rather than better—and he is, I know, meditating a great change, but I dare say no more.”

“What change?”

It was Esther’s voice.

“Dear heart, Esther,” Faith exclaimed, “you are ever present when you are thought to be absent. You are like the sprites in the fairy tales.”

Esther made no reply, but pushing past Clémence and Faith, who were seated on a raised dais of the oriel window facing the Churchyard, she perched upon a narrow ledge of the stone sill, and pressing her face against the lattice, watched every passer-by with eager, hungry eyes. At last she sprang down.

“He comes!” she said; “he comes, and Master Cheeke with him.”

In another minute both young men were at the door. Richard entered first, saying:

“News, news! Good or ill, as the mood takes you.”

Clémence was at Louis’s side in an instant. He looked at Faith, but addressed his sister.

“Clémence, I am to leave you this night. I go to bid farewell to my mother and Clarice. I am sent



to the Court at the Hague, in the service of the Prince of Orange, and further, by the intervention of Lady Russell, you may accompany me, if you choose to enter the household of the Princess Mary."

"So sudden," Clémence said; "and our mother and Clarice?"

"By the same good friend this matter is also considered. Clarice is to be received in Lady Russell's household at Stratton, and our mother cared for also."

"It is sudden, as you say, Clémence, but I will be as a daughter to my aunt if—"

Faith stopped. She knew better than anyone else on what perilous ground her father stood. He was a suspected man, and the plots against the Government, now in the air, though not yet matured, were likely to implicate every man who had protested against the infringement of the rights of the City. It is ever strange to notice how great events passing in the world seem but small to every individual soul, when weighed in the balance with the secret desires and longings of the heart.

It was so now. The two men, as they stood silently facing each other, lost all thought of plots and dangers and tumults and rebellions in the one absorbing word—"Separation." To part from Faith was to Louis de Massué like the parting with all that made life dear. While Richard Cheeke could only repeat to himself that if he lost Clémence, he must lose all hope of winning in that struggle upwards, which he had manfully carried on since love for this pure and beautiful woman had filled his soul. And Faith was as dear to Louis, while she felt for him the love



which so often awakes in a woman's heart for one whom she has tended in sickness, whether of mind or body.

While these fears of a swift-coming parting filled the hearts of Faith and Clémence, of Louis and Richard, there was another who was eagerly listening to what passed. Esther Branstone, untutored and undisciplined, ever chafing under restraint, and continually nursing in her heart the idea that she was but tolerated in the goldsmith's household, because her brother was of use to him in his business, had nevertheless attracted Louis. He treated her only as a wild, spoilt child, with no thought that he was treading on dangerous ground, and that the child had grown into the woman by that sudden transition which we see sometimes to our surprise, without ever guessing the true cause. Now, as she looked upon the scene before her, she read in the faces of those who were so soon to part from each other, the story of the love for which, poor child, she hungered.

"If only he looked at me like that," she thought, as she saw Louis put his arm round his cousin, and heard the whispered, "Wish us God speed, sweet cousin—may I not say sweetheart," and saw Faith's answering gaze of perfect confidence and love. Her heart was hot within her as Faith said, "I am wholly yours, Louis." Richard Cheeke might love Clémence, it was nothing to her—but Louis—Louis, who had so often called her "dear child," and reasoned with her and consoled her in his hours of convalescence, when she would sit by his side and complain of what she thought were her wrongs. Louis was her ideal—her hero.

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How could she let him pass out of her sight for ever, perhaps, and make no sign?

The conference of the four lovers was now interrupted by the appearance of Master Jenkyns. He came slowly into the room, and looking round, said:

"I have a weighty matter to communicate. Come hither, Faith."

Faith left Louis's side, and said anxiously:

"Sit down, dear father," for Master Jenkyns pressed his hand to his side and evidently struggled for composure.

"I have heard that I am in danger by reason of my friendship with Master Pilkington. He has been to me a man of but small importance, nevertheless, when he asked me if I were in his shoes would I go with Mayor and Aldermen to meet the Popish duke on his return from Scotland, I answered *no*. Nor would I, for more than the damages in which Pilkington is cast—one hundred thousand pounds. See then, children, there are two courses open to me—to stay here and maybe lose fortune and life—or retire in favour of my nephew, Edward Branstone. I have settled matters with him, and I leave this business in his hands for your benefit, my dear, only child, as his wife. Nay, Faith, do not look at me aghast. Edward is a good youth, and loves you better than tongue can tell. The thing is settled. I depart for Holland, where many are finding refuge, and at dawn on the morrow I will give you, my beloved child, into the safe keeping of a trusty man. I would fain see your hands joined by one of our own ministers, though I fear any question of legality. Thus,



one Master Perkyns will unite you in the bonds of matrimony this evening in this house. I proceed then to Harwich, and leave this country till happier times. I call God to witness, I do this from no craven fear, but out of love for the child I can no longer protect. I know full well what her pain would be did she see her father condemned, and she would then be thrown penniless on the world. Edward has kept clear of all suspicion. He is at heart opposed to resistance, and if a time-server—well, it may be, some must needs serve the times, and Edward will not forfeit my good opinion thereby.”

There was the strangest mixture of motives in this determination of Master Jenkyns, and a curiously strong belief in the perfect submission which his daughter would yield him. It was for her sake, he told himself; and her union with Edward Branstone would protect her from many perils—from gay gallants, and unworthy suitors. Men are proverbially blind to what is going on before them in matters of love, but it is certainly strange that, though Master Jenkyns had been so constantly in the presence of his daughter and Louis, he had looked upon the affectionate interest Faith showed in her patient, whom she had tended so carefully, with old Abigail's help, as that of a sister for a brother. And in spite of all the friendliness he was willing to show towards his sister's children, Master Jenkyns had the inborn dislike to the French, which he shared in common with many of the class to which he belonged. Louis's French name was always a stumbling-block to his tongue, and he was careful to avoid pronouncing it, and called him *Lewis*, with a



strong pronunciation of the first vowel and the final consonant.

When her father had finished the story of his determination, and the circumstances which led to it, Faith, who had not spoken one word, or even tried to interrupt him, now said:

"Father, I cannot marry Edward. I will go with you rather to exile and poverty."

Faith spoke calmly and deliberately, and, dreading the heat which she feared Louis would show, she left her father's side and went up to him, laying her hand upon his arm. Louis was gnawing his under lip, and doing his utmost to restrain himself, but in spite of the gentle pressure of Faith's hand, he began:

"Your daughter, sir, cannot marry yonder Branstone. She has pledged her love to me; I claim her as my own. No power in heaven or earth shall part us. It is monstrous, it is beyond the limits of a father's tyranny, to make over a child like yours to a poor apprentice to the watchmaker's trade, when a prince might well resign all to possess her."

Master Jenkyns waved his hand.

"Peace, Louis, peace. I am master here. I will not be gainsaid in my own house, where," he added bitterly, "my sister's son has, it seems, repaid my care for him by treachery."

"Treachery! Do you make me out a villain? It is no treachery—by heaven, sir, I will not suffer this to pass!"

"Tut tut, Louis," Richard Cheeke said, "keep quiet. You will only lose by this vehemence."

"Yes, Louis, dear Louis," Clémence said, "I pray you remember all we owe to our good uncle."



"I leave this country to-night," Louis said, "taking with me my sister Clémence. I will take also with me my bride, my sweet Faith. Say, dear one, that you will consent,"

"No, Louis," Faith said, "no. I will not risk bringing on my head the curse which falls on disobedient children. But," she added, as Louis tried to interrupt her, "I will marry with no man but you, and, if it be years, I will remain faithful—faithful to death, if so God wills."

"Rest on that promise, dear brother," Clémence said, "nor stir the bitter waters of strife. I will come with you if it is thought convenient, if—"

"You cannot, you must not do this," Richard Cheeke exclaimed. "Nay, Clémence, if you leave me, I am of all men most despairing. I shall fall again into the slough whence you have helped me to rise. Nay, Clémence, of your mercy do not leave me thus."

Clémence smiled as she said sadly:

"Nay, good friend; if you depend only on my weak hand to raise you or keep you from falling, it is but a broken staff whereon to lean."

"But you gave me hope, Clémence; you gave me hope."

"Nor do I withdraw that hope," Clémence said. "But sure, there is no time to make protestations when grave matters press on those we love. Say, Louis, shall I depart with you to the Hague, as you proposed? We shall bear our good uncle and Faith company."

"Faith will abide here," Master Jenkyns said sternly; "for, if she is obstinate, I need not the company of a rebellious daughter. Come hither, Edward Branstone,



and claim the fulfilment of the promise I made you, making the bond secure in a well-attested agreement.

Edward, who had been at the door awaiting his summons, and, it is to be feared, within earshot of much that had passed, now strode up the room to the group collected at the further end. His eyes fastened on Faith with hungry eagerness, and were alight with the certainty of possession of a coveted gift. He looked neither to right nor left, but taking Faith's little cold hand in his, he said:

"I am ready to do my part, my good uncle, and be a true and loyal husband, to this maiden, whom I have loved more years than I care to count. Say, Faith, will you give your heart to me?"

"No, Edward, I cannot give you what is not mine to give. My heart has been given to another; and sure, you would not care to take the empty husk without the kernel."

Edward replied with deliberate calmness:

"I would sooner have the husk than nought else. It baffles me to think how you can add a straw's weight to the burden on your father's back at this moment. I tell you he is in danger. His name is freely spoken of in the City as a rebel against authority, and you know what has been the fate of suspects of late—mind, I pray you, your duty to your parent."

"I will go with my father," Faith replied, with heightening colour; "nor do I desire to be reminded of my duty by you. I will not stay here on the conditions you desire. You may think me a weak-hearted maiden, who is turned hither and thither by every wind that blows, but you will see that I can resolve when needs



be—ay, and be steadfast in my resolve. Father, dear father, do not be angry with me. I will obey you in all else, but give myself in marriage to Edward Branstone, I will not.”

There was a dignity as well as resolution in Faith's face and manner as she spoke, and her father found he had not the gentle, submissive girl to deal with, but a quiet, determined woman.

“Be it so,” he said; “but remember you shall not depart with me—nay, not in the same vessel. I should fear the fate of Jonah might overtake the ship, and that God's wrath would fall on a disobedient daughter. I have nothing further to urge—save this: Edward Branstone, I must scan our agreement again. There must be a clause providing that my daughter shall have a share of the profits of the business. I will make sufficient provision for her, but nought besides. Good friends,” Master Jenkyns said, “I would fain be alone now, till my good nephew brings me the document lately signed and sealed, for which another must be substituted, and I would fain take counsel of God in what terms to couch this new agreement, necessitated by my daughter's self-will.”

“Oh! father, father!” burst now from Faith's lips, as slowly and sadly she left the room, followed by her cousin Clémence.

Louis made one more attempt to induce his uncle to alter his determination, but it was in vain. Then he turned with flashing eyes to Edward Branstone, and said:

“Sure, you will not suffer this iniquitous scheme to

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be carried out, and by your means an innocent maiden be disinherited."

"By your means, rather," Edward said, in the same provokingly quiet, cool voice.

Richard Cheeke saw Louis's temper was roused, and putting his arm through his friend's, he said:

"Let us consult together what shall be our best course. Come, Louis, nor bandy words with this stiff-backed, cunning apprentice, who has his own interests first and foremost, methinks."

But the "stiff-backed apprentice" was quite unmoved by Louis's wrath and Richard's epithets. He made no rejoinder, but left the room, saying to his uncle:

"I go, sir, to fetch hither the agreement, and to see it duly cancelled."

"The mean-spirited villain," Louis said, "he cares for the money and not for her, otherwise he would not persist in urging his suit. Let us away. The place is hateful to me, and I cannot collect my thoughts, nor settle what is to be my next movement. Help me, Richard, to come to a right decision."

"I am in a sore strait myself, Louis," Richard said, "but let us confer together and come to some conclusion. I know a place of security, free from fear of eavesdroppers. It is an inner chamber beyond the kitchen, where no one but Abigail has access. She will aid me in making all secure."

Abigail was in the little chamber, engaged in mending the household linen, in which Esther was supposed to help her. She readily put aside her heap of homespun linen, and said:



"You may bide here an hour undisturbed, Master Louis, but when the clocks give warning for noon, you must make haste to depart, for the 'prentices will be coming in for their dinner, hungry as a pack of wolves. They are enow to eat the master out of house and home."

It was evident that Abigail had no suspicion of the impending changes, and she went on her way to superintend the making of a huge pasty, thinking, as so many have done before her, that all things would go on as they had done for years, and that her daily round of little duties and services for her master, would have no interruption till life came to an end.

No one had paid much heed to Esther, nor concerned themselves about her. But Esther had heard all that had passed, concealed by the projection of the bay windows. In this child's heart, where so lately no serious thought had ever found a place, there was now at work a love, hopeless, almost despairing, which made her determine to dare and suffer anything sooner than see Faith become Louis de Massué's bride. All unconsciously Louis gave Esther the opportunity she desired. After a long deliberation Louis and Richard Cheeke formed a plan to release Faith from her painful position in Edward Branstone's house. Before noon had struck Louis went to Richard Cheeke's chambers in the Temple, and there wrote a letter, on the thick lawyers' paper, to Faith, propounding his scheme and imploring her to consent to carry it out. The letter ran as follows, Richard Cheeke helping Louis to avoid the French idioms, which might make his meaning less clear.



"This is for my dear and ever to be loved Faith Jenkyns, my cousin, and, as I hope in God, soon to be my bride, from whom no power in heaven or earth shall part me henceforth. I go to Canterbury this night—starting from Charing Cross at midnight. Meet me there with our trusty Abigail and my sister Clémence. The good Dean, ever ready to befriend us, will marry us, as I trust, in the Cathedral on the morrow. We shall have a safe refuge in the house where my mother dwells with my sister Clarice. We will repair to Dover, and take ship from that port. I will see my Lord Russell and tell him of our plan. We shall reach the Hague by way of Calais, a shorter voyage by sea, and we shall thus avoid contact with your father, who sails from the port of Harwich. Once at the Hague, by the good offices of my Lady Russell, the Princess Mary will extend her favour to us. Thus, dearest heart, you will be free from the importunity of that arrogant apprentice, and we will leave him to his ill-gotten gain, with none to say him nay. Of Abigail I am certain—of my sister Clémence all but certain. I send this letter by a trusty messenger. Read it and say *ay*—or *no*. This last, may God forbid."

This letter was endorsed, "For Mistress Faith Jenkyns," and another was enclosed, containing but a few words addressed by Richard Cheeke to Clémence, and entreating her to fall in with the plan proposed, and to grant the earnest prayer of her humble servant, R. C.

The rest of the day was spent in maturing the scheme. Lord Russell demurred at the sailing from Dover, but



when Louis urged that he could scarce leave England with no farewell from his mother and sister he consented. Money was provided for the costs of the journey, but Louis made no mention of Faith. Lady Russell was at this time at Stratton with her children. If she had been present Louis felt he could have confided in her, but something held him back from letting Lord Russell into his secret. Lord Russell's mind, indeed, was so full of the affairs in which he was implicated, that the departure of his wife's young kinsman to the Hague was but of secondary importance. He felt, perhaps, a relief that he was so provided for, and safely out of the way in times which daily and hourly grew more difficult and dangerous.

It was agreed that the letter should be taken to the goldsmith's house by a messenger, whom Richard Cheeke was to accompany to St. Paul's Churchyard, and remain concealed there amongst the blocks of stone, and the sheds in which the masons were at work upon the building of Sir Christopher Wren's new Cathedral of St. Paul. It would have excited suspicion if Edward Branstone had seen Richard Cheeke coming to the house. The messenger was given a gold piece to ensure the faithful performance of his errand, and he was instructed to put the letter into the hands of the gentleman, for whom he was to inquire, and to say "ay" or "no" was sufficient answer. The shop was closed; there had been but few customers that day; and Edward Branstone was fully occupied in making the necessary arrangements for his uncle's departure, which it was necessary to keep as secret as possible. Esther had been on the alert all day, and had wandered about

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eager, restless, and unhappy. She felt aggrieved and sore at heart that she was shut out from all the consultations that were going on. What had passed between Louis and Richard in Abigail's room? What were Clémence and Faith speaking of in low voices, as if afraid anyone should hear what they said? Would Louis come back to that house no more? Must she part from him for ever—never hear his voice again, never feel the touch of his hand on her hair, never listen to what he told her of his old home in Picardy, of the fine doings at the French Court, of his sister Clarice and his mother?

"I vow I will see him once more or I shall die," Esther murmured again and again to herself. "I care not—I love him—I love him. Why am I wicked, as old Abigail says I am? Yes, I will see him. I will tell him how cold-hearted Faith's love is—nought to mine."

While all these thoughts were raging in Esther's heart, the messenger despatched by Richard Cheeke tapped at the door of the shop. Esther was there alone. She had been called by her brother to keep guard in the shop while he went to hold a final consultation with his uncle, and to make one last effort to bring Faith to consent to the scheme proposed.

Esther answered the summons at the door, and a boy handed her a letter, repeating what he had been instructed to say: "For Mistress Faith Jenkyns—the answer 'Ay' or 'No.'"

Esther's hand trembled with eagerness, and before she had time to consider what she was doing, she unfastened the silk cord, broke the seal, and scanned the words, written there in a clear hand, with some diffi-



culty. But she gathered enough to catch the drift of what Louis meant. "Meet me at Charing Cross—my cousin soon to be my bride." The girl's breast heaved with the tumult of feeling. For a few moments the memory of Faith's devotion to Louis—the long watch over his sick bed; her gentleness towards her in her wildest moods when all besides were against her—swept over her. But she drove her good angel away, and the dark spirit of jealousy gained the victory. In her selfishness she forgot the pain she would bring upon Louis himself, as well as on Faith. Esther thrust the letter under the folds of her kerchief, and saying to the messenger: "I am Mistress Faith Jenkyns—say in answer '*No,*' and begone."

The lie was spoken. The door was closed and bolted, and Esther, clasping her hands in an agony of mingled triumph and fear, fled upstairs to her own little chamber, where, pulling the bolt across the door, she threw herself on her bed, clasping the letter to her heart, and moaning:

"If it had been sent to me—oh! if it had been sent to me. I should near have died of joy, but now—now I have parted him from Faith for ever. He is not mine, but he is not hers, and I will love him till I win his love. I have heard old Abigail say that love begetteth love at last! At last! Oh, Louis, Louis! my brave, grand Louis, why did you make the poor little orphan child love you, only to go near to break her heart?"

A storm of passionate tears was followed by utter exhaustion, and Esther sank into a heavy slumber as the short autumn afternoon closed in, and the little chamber in the roof was enveloped in the misty dark-

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ness of a London night. Esther was aroused at last by a tap at her door, which was repeated again and again. Then she heard the clock below striking midnight, and starting up, she said:—

“Who is there?”

“It is I—Faith,” was the reply. “Open to me, Esther.”

But Esther shrank from meeting her cousin, with the guilty sense of the injury she had done her, pressing on her like the surrounding darkness. Then there was the letter, still concealed next her heart. If Faith came in she might discover it, for there was a light seen through the chinks of the door, which proved that Faith had a candle in her hand.

“No, I cannot open to you,” she said. “I am sick, and must needs lie a-bed and rest my head.”

“You have had nought to eat since noon—no wonder you are sick. I have a platter here with a morsel of pasty and a mug of wine. Open to me, Esther.”

But Esther was obdurate.

“Put it down by the door. If I want it I will take it in. I cannot talk longer.”

Faith turned away sad at heart. She had been with her father all through the last hours of the day, and had ministered to him with loving tenderness. It had been a bitter parting when, accompanied by Edward, Master Jenkyns left his home to be, like many others, an exile in a foreign land. Faith clung to him to the last.

“Let me come with you, father.”

“Nay, nay, bide here in safety, my daughter, under



the care of one whom I can trust. Bide here with Abigail and the child, Esther, and God turn thee to a better mind, nor bring down on thee the heavy weight which lies on the head of the disobedient children."

Then Master Jenkyns, having folded Faith to his heart, went out into the murky night, to cross the threshold of his home no more. He had left all his affairs in perfect order—a provision for his sister and her children to be paid from the profits of the business; for Faith a goodly portion on her marriage with Edward Branstone, which, he assured himself, must come to pass sooner or later, and a special command that old Abigail should receive her due wage to the end of her life, as a reward for faithful service of many years. This departure of the stern Puritan from home and country, for conscience' sake, as he believed, acted as a salve to the wound that parting from his only child caused.

"Better to go forth into a strange land like Abraham, good Edward," he had said to his nephew, "than yield one inch of the ground on which I take my stand—the hatred of tyranny and oppression in all matters of state and of religion. When a Popish king is on the throne, mark my words, this country will come swift to its downfall, unless the Lord of hosts arise to defend the cause of His people."

Master Jenkyns had not departed an hour too soon. The next morning Edward Branstone was visited by certain persons who came to question the goldsmith, and entangle him in his talk. Edward was the right man to parry these inquiries. He was always one of few words, and baffled and discomfited, the two men, who were ready to swear falsely against any man for

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hire, left the shop without gaining any information. But watch was kept on many of the city tradesmen's houses by like unworthy spies of the Court party; for their opposition to the enforced surrender of the city charters was thought as dangerous as the opposition of many in the higher ranks of life to the Act of Succession, by which the crown would descend, on the King's death, to his brother, the avowed Roman Catholic prince—the Duke of York.

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## CHAPTER IX.

## THE BIRDS ARE FLOWN.

It was not till daylight the next morning that Esther discovered the billet, enclosed in Louis de Massué's cover, addressed to Clémence by Richard Cheeke, and she was terror-struck when, seated in her old place at the bay window over-looking the Churchyard, she saw Richard Cheeke crossing it.

Faith and Clémence were busily employed putting things in train for their departure, for neither of them intended to remain under Edward Branstone's roof. He was quite master of the occasion. He had taken his uncle's place at the board at noon; he had assumed a dignified air when speaking to Faith, and seemed as if he would for the time forget the lover and treat her only as his uncle's daughter. He did not inquire what plans she had made—taking it for granted that she would remain in the house, for the good reason that she had no other in which to take refuge. Edward did not concern himself about Clémence—she might go or she might stay as she liked; but he deferred all consultations and decisions for the present, thinking it would be more for his own interests to do so.

It was soon after the noon-day dinner that Esther had seen Richard Cheeke cross the Churchyard. Then



she heard steps on the stairs, and Edward Branstone opening the door said, in a very ordinary tone of voice:

“Master Cheeke desires to speak with Mistress Clémence.”

Richard came hastily in, and when he saw the two cousins seated at their work—Faith disentangling the thread of her distaff, and Clémence filling a small box with trifles belonging to Faith, he could not restrain himself.

“So,” he said, “you sit here quietly, while you have played fast and loose with true hearts. Ah! for shame, Mistress Faith, to send back only the one fatal word in answer to a man’s last appeal. He is quite broken-hearted. Sure, you might have softened your negative. But, perchance, you are set on remaining here, under the conditions which have been proposed! Sure, it will be easier for you, Mistress Jenkyns. It would seem all women are alike, and we poor fools cheat ourselves into the belief that those for whom we are ready to lay down our lives are angels.”

Faith had at first been utterly at a loss to know what Richard meant by this sudden invective directed against her and Clémence, but, as soon as he had finished, she spoke in a calm voice, which was a contrast to Richard’s vehemence.

“Master Cheeke, methinks you forget a little the courtesy which befits a gentleman. I would have you to remember that here, in this room, yesterday, I let my dear father know that I could not, in this instance, obey him. I spoke without a doubt that Louis fully took my meaning. If he failed to do so I am sorrowful for him, but as to my sending back to him an



answer of 'No,' I know not of what you are speaking. An answer forsooth—an answer to what?"

"To his letter—to the last appeal Louis de Massué made to you to resort to Canterbury with him, his sister, and old Abigail, starting from the Charing Cross yesternight. And you pretend to know nought of it! Mistress Clémence, do you also feign ignorance?"

"I feign nothing," Clémence said, "for I know nothing."

"It is hard for me to doubt your word, but a messenger I employed to carry to Mistress Faith a letter from Louis—with one short entreaty from myself to you wrapt up in the cover—swears he put the missive into the hand of a gentlewoman who, by the dim light in the sky, he could scarce discern, but she read it and hastily sent back the answer 'No,' Louis having prayed for the single word 'Ay' or 'No.' The cruel negative was enow, he said; he could not ask again for the boon so coldly denied, and methinks he was right. He will bid his mother farewell this day, and sail from Dover to-night, to seek, let us trust, a happier fate. But I tell you, Mistress Jenkyns, the sword-thrust of that villain, which he got for your sake, was nought to the pain you gave him by that word—sure you might have softened it! Could you have seen him as I saw him last, as he stood on the steps of the coach before starting, you would not care, methinks, to keep before you the face of mingled misery and disappointment. Well—it is over now, but I will seek out the miscreant to whom we gave a gold piece for performing his mission, and if he has lied to us he shall be beaten within an inch of his life. Adieu now,



Mistress Jenkyns, and adieu, Clémence—I call you in my heart of hearts Clemency. Show that quality to me, for I am in sore need of it. I have aspired too high—it was scarce likely that you should stoop from your pure heights to such an one as I am. Farewell.”

And then, without another word, Richard Cheeke was gone. When the two girls were left alone, they tried in vain to solve the mystery of the letter.

“If I had but known,” Faith said, “I would not have dismissed him with one bare word. I know not—I might have yielded. God knoweth how I love him, and that life without him will be barren of all joy. It is over—quite over for me; he will see at the Hague many fairer and more fitted to be his wife, and I shall remain lonely to the end.”

Clémence did not speak. She sat mute by the table, looking at the door through which Richard had gone out, half expecting his return, telling herself that by rejecting his love she might be answerable for his relapse into the careless life of which he had often spoken to her, and from which, as he said, she had raised him. A deep sigh broke from her at last, and clasping her hands together, she whispered:

“Over! all over! yes, it is all over for me also. Let us go on with our preparations, Faith, and seek a refuge with my mother at Canterbury.”

Meanwhile, the listener concealed in the bay window had gone through torture, to which the pain she had inflicted on others was as nothing. Blinded by jealousy and love, Esther had scarcely realised what her despicable deed had brought about—pain to Faith, and sorrow of heart, to which her woe-struck face abundantly



testified. But the ill effects of what she had done did not stop here. As Richard Cheeke told of Louis's misery and disappointment, as he started in the coach for Canterbury on the dark October night, the thought, that it was her hand that had struck the blow, maddened her—to bring ill upon him, to be unable even to atone for it by any act of hers—filled her with anguish. Should she confess now? Should she disclose her deed of treachery to two of the people she had injured? But what would confession avail? Her own humiliation and the indignant scorn which would fall upon her head would not bring Louis back. How could she bear to see him, even if he could be reached? He would loathe her henceforth did he know what she had done, and thus, by her own hand, she had crushed out every tender and kindly feeling he had ever had for her.

“I will flee,” she said; “I will not stay here. If other folk can get to the Hague I can get there. I can sing, and dance, and earn my bread, and I may, perchance, look on him once more. Even for that I would go through worse perils than those by sea or land. Yes, even for that—that little scrap of comfort—I will go!”

The arrival of Master Perkyns, who had received a peremptory dismissal on the previous day when he came prepared to join the hands of Edward Branstone and Faith Jenkyns in marriage, made a diversion in Esther's favour. She escaped from her hiding-place without attracting the attention of either Faith or Clémence, who were questioned by Master Perkyns as



to the reason, of the postponement of the wedding ceremony.

"For," he said, "my friend Master Branstone assures me it is only a postponement. We love to see the union of two earthly pilgrims whose faces are set Zionward, whither two, who are not agreed, cannot walk in company. Of your father's daughter, Mistress Faith, there can be no questioning that she is converted to God."

When Master Perkyns once began to launch forth in his peculiar style of oratory he never knew when to stop. He loved to hear his own voice, and he proceeded to descant on the duties of husband and wife, and the need of setting their faces like flints against the ungodly of this wicked generation. It was singularly inappropriate thus to speak to Faith, but she knew it was hopeless to attempt to interrupt Master Perkyns till, so to speak, the sand of his hour-glass had run out. And then, when Edward Branstone came up from the shop, and in his stiff, grave fashion bade Master Perkyns welcome to the noon-day meal, the worthy minister directed his homily to him, and finished by declaring that he was ready to fulfil the wishes of himself and Faith at any moment that it might please him to appoint. Faith took refuge in silence; her resolution had been taken, and she went on with her preparations that day quietly, but with the determination which was part of her nature.

Clémence had more misgivings and fears than her cousin. She was haunted with the idea that Richard Cheeke would return to the careless life from which he had so often told her love for her had raised him.



"Whither shall we go, Faith?" she asked, almost despairingly. "If only Lady Russell was in London we might resort to her, but all things seem against us. Surely we cannot reach Canterbury alone and unprotected."

"We shall have Abigail with us, and to Canterbury we must go—if, as you feel sure, your mother will receive us. I have despatched an apprentice to the yard from which the stage waggon starts, and he will bring back word the day and hour of departure. Nay, Clémence, do not lose heart. We have taken our own way and we must abide by it."

"Will you tell your cousin Edward of your intention?"

"Most certainly. I will not leave this house slily. I do not fear what he will say, and he can do nought. My father has left provision for my needs. Some money has already been paid to me out of the business, and I hold it in this leather purse, which I shall fasten round my neck and keep hidden in my breast."

"Where is Esther? We have not set eyes on her since the morning," Faith asked of Abigail.

"Shut up in her chamber—and, as far as I know, she has not tasted food to-day. It is now near supper-time and I will go and make her come out, the little hussy—sobbing and breaking her heart—I heard her through the door. She is a naughty baggage, and yet I can't help loving her, for when she is in a good mood she has pretty ways with her—as others beside me have found out—worse luck."

Abigail spoke in riddles which neither of the girls understood, and Faith did not ask for an explanation.



She was too much occupied with her own plans to question Abigail. But Clémence said:

“Would Esther fain go with us to my mother?”

“No, no—not she. That wouldn’t help her out of her trouble—poor child! Time will cure her; before another full moon she will be a merry, care-naught little hussy again. Never fear! never fear!”

The stage waggon was to start on the morning of the second day for Canterbury, and it was on the evening before, that Faith went to her cousin, as he sat behind his counter, placing the silver ornaments and trinkets in a safe place for the night.

“Edward,” Faith said, “I am come to bid you farewell. I depart to-morrow to my aunt’s home at Canterbury, and take with me Abigail and my cousin Clémence. Edward,” Faith said, putting out her hand to him, “let us part as good cousins and friends should part.”

Edward Branstone stood up, and then said in his cool, deliberate fashion:

“You cannot leave this house. I forbid it.”

“And I may say you cannot forbid it—you have no right to do so or—”

“You will remain here as my wife, according to your worthy father’s command.”

Faith met Edward’s eyes, burning with passion and anger, with a firm, unflinching gaze, and even he quailed before it.

“You cannot force me to rest here. Should you try to do so I will appeal to those who can help me. You think I am a weak, defenceless woman, but I will



prove to you I can be strong to resist what I know to be wrong."

"Wrong! That is ill-spoken when you are so led astray as to disobey your father, who went into exile heavy at heart through your obstinacy."

"Yes," Faith said, "it would be a cruel wrong to yield to your wishes when my heart is wholly another's. I love Louis de Massué. I will never wed another man—I have vowed to be faithful to him, and I will not break my vow."

Edward set his teeth, and taking Faith's hands he held them both in an iron grip.

"You are mine," he said, "and you shall never be another man's. I will summon Master Perkyns, and he shall bind you to me by the law of God and man, and nought shall part us asunder."

Faith's courage began to fail, and she felt like a bird in the snare of the fowler. Clémence, who had been waiting on the stairs in great anxiety for Faith's return from her interview with her cousin, now heard her voice raised calling Abigail, and then "Clémence, Clémence." She was about to go down herself to the shop when a little figure rushed past her, and in another moment Esther, with dishevelled hair, and a face haggard with the conflict of the last two days, entered the shop. She threw herself on her brother, saying:

"What mean you, Edward? Nay, you shall set Faith free. See," she said, "you have bruised her little hands by your great clumsy fingers. Shame on you, Edward! If only Louis were here you would get your deserts."



"Silly child!" Edward said, as he loosened his grip of Faith's hands. "Silly child—what folly is this?"

"Folly!" Esther said, "folly! I am not a child—I am a woman, and I know what love means. Faith shall be free to go whither she lists, for all you can say or do." "At least by this I will make atonement," she murmured.

Abigail now appeared, being summoned by Clémence, and two of the apprentices came peeping in from the shadows of the dimly-lighted room beyond. Edward Branstone was nearly beside himself with anger, but he had plenty of self-control. He resumed his usual unruffled demeanour, and reseating himself, he said coolly:

"Begone, all of you—nor raise a hubbub like this. You varlets!" to the apprentices, "I will teach you manners unless you depart. My cousin and I have business to transact which needs no interference." Then to Faith he said, "We will speak more of this anon—for the present, good-e'en to you."

"Poor little Esther!" Faith said tenderly, "what is it that makes you look so ill?"

"Starvation and grief!" It was Abigail who spoke. "Go up to bed, child, and I will bring you a hot posset, and then you will sleep."

Esther's only reply was to throw her arms with passionate vehemence round Faith's neck, and laying her head on her shoulders, she said:

"Kiss me, Cousin Faith—kiss me, and do not hate me."

"Hate you, poor child—nay, I love you, and I thank you for your timely interference on my behalf.



I leave this house on the morrow, but I will not forget you."

"I leave it also," was on Esther's lips, but she did not utter the words. "I will seek him out," she thought; "I will see him and confess my sin to him, but not to her—oh! not to her. Sure, when I tell him it was my great love for him that urged me on, he will understand—ay, and perchance forgive poor little Esther. Only to see him again—only to hear his voice, and I shall die in peace, and then—then he can take Faith for his bride. I shall be dead and there will be no more pain for me then."

Little did Faith think what was passing through Esther's mind, nor what a conflict was raging in her undisciplined heart as she put her arm tenderly round her, and taking her up to her attic chamber laid her on the bed and said:

"Rest, dear child—rest, and try to sleep. Abigail will bring you a posset such as I used to make for my father when he was troubled and uneasy—and," Faith said, kneeling down by Esther's side, "let us pray to be kept safe from all temptation. I will ask the Lord to comfort us in the changes and sorrows which have come on us."

Then the Puritan maiden raised her voice in prayer, with that earnest pleading which seems to bring down a blessing from on high. Peace—the peace which God giveth to his children—for this Faith prayed, and did not hear, as she left the room, the smothered cry, "But I am not his child—I am a deceiver and wicked." Then Esther sprang from the bed and put her hand on the



latch of the door, saying, "I will tell her—I will confess—I will follow her and confess."

Again she was overmastered by fear and dread of what might be the result of her confession. "No, I cannot, I cannot. I will see him again, I will let him know of my great love ere I humble myself in the dust before him. Oh, why, why did he steal away my poor little heart? So forlorn as I am, with none to love me, none to take me to their arms and cherish me—all people love Faith, while I have none to love me." Then the poor child threw herself again on the bed, and when Abigail arrived with the posset she had fallen into a heavy slumber. Abigail shaded the light she carried with her hand, and looked round the room, which was strewn with Esther's wardrobe. Bits of finery, gay ribbons, and trinkets were scattered about; the coffer which held her possessions was turned out, and a shapeless bundle lay by its side.

"What does this mean? She is never setting out too. We must leave her; she must bide with her brother. We are off at daybreak; chances are she'll be asleep and know nothing till the house is clear. I'll leave this spiced wine and cracknel 'gainst she wakes. Poor thing, poor thing! Men have no right to philander with such children just for their own pleasure—but that's just like a Frenchman, and to tell the honest truth Master Louis is a Frenchman to the backbone, though he has a pretty way with him, and was like a lamb when he was sick. Well-a-day, it's a queer world, and what can't be mended must e'en be put up with. I don't relish turning out from house and home, but as



to leaving the child I've brought up from her mother's arms—I can't, and there's an end on't."

Thus meditating, Abigail sought her bed, and lay down to rest her old bones till she should hear the clock strike three. Sleep does not come to the old as readily as to the young, and Abigail never lost consciousness; for the perils of the journey to Canterbury, which were manifold in her eyes, floated before her in the forms of coaches overturned, broken limbs, and, more terrible than all, ruthless robbers who haunted the king's highway, and made raids on travellers, to seize any valuables in their baggage they could lay their hands on.

The next day Edward Branstone awoke to the fact that he was left in solitary possession of the house, the shop, and all that it contained. He never really believed that Faith would carry out her plan. Like many others he had thought of his cousin as a sweet, yielding girl, who had but little strength of purpose, and was swayed by the events of the moment and the influence of those around her. No mistake could be greater. Faith had the mingled sweetness and strength, which is the greatest charm in a woman's character. While Clémence was torn with misgivings and fears as to her refusal to listen to Richard Cheeke's entreaties, and alternately lamenting her decision, and dreading the consequences to Richard, with which he had threatened her, Faith was calm in the certainty that she had acted for the best, and was content to leave the future in God's hands. Richard Cheeke had tried in vain to track the messenger who had taken the gold piece for his errand and then made off. He



could only think he was one of many who were ready to pick up a living by lies, and that the story of his putting the letter into the hands of a young gentlewoman, who sent back that answer of "No," was a complete fabrication.

After the hopeless inquiry and search of two days, Richard Cheeke gave up the quest, and appeared before the goldsmith's shop on the day of Faith's departure. Edward was engaged with customers, and Richard saw that he had no hope of getting a hearing till the business in hand was concluded. When at last Edward had transferred from the pocket of one of the gentlemen a number of gold coins, in exchange for a ring set with emeralds, he turned to Richard Cheeke.

"What is your pleasure, sir?"

"I came to inquire for the gentlewomen in your house, and desire to see them."

Edward's lips curled scornfully.

"You are come on a hopeless quest, sir; there are no gentlewomen in my house. They have quitted it, and, as I see by a few words written on a slip of paper, they have taken the stage waggon for Canterbury this morning at daybreak. It is not convenient to me to pursue them as yet, as other business presses, but I shall do so, the Lord permitting, ere long, and carry out my worthy uncle's wishes with regard to his daughter."

Then Edward returned to the rearrangement of various trinkets which had been examined by his late customers, and seemed disinclined to make any further communication.



Richard Cheeke, on his part, had little more to say. He knew, at least, that those whom he sought were likely to be safe if they arrived at their destination, and turned over a plan in his own mind, which he would at once carry out. He was leaving the shop with a careless "Good-day to you," when Edward Branstone said:

"I hear from the serving-woman, who has taken on herself the duties lately performed by Abigail, who has deserted them in unwarrantable and unseemly fashion, that my sister Esther has departed with those who have chosen to flee from the shelter of my roof. I shall take steps to recover her, and she will come hither with Faith Jenkyns. For the rest, I do not desire the return of the serving-woman Abigail, or the French cousin, who has doubtless prevailed on my sister to neglect her duty, and set her father's will at defiance."

Again there was a pause, and again Richard Cheeke restrained his inclination to answer Edward Branstone by fierce and angry invective. His provoking coolness, his deliberate voice, his thin lips, which scarcely parted as he spoke, were irritating to the last degree.

"But, what boots it to pick a quarrel with a fellow like this?" Richard said to himself. "It would serve no good end, and forsooth, I should not care to cross swords with a Puritan goldsmith. A good thrashing would be more to my taste. He shall never possess Faith Jenkyns, or I am mistaken. I think I see a way to prevent this, at any rate. If Lady Russell were in London I could easily have hindered things from coming to this pass. But Stratton is not as far off as



the Indies, and a good horse will take me thither in a few hours. So courage, and God defend the right!"

With another "Good-day to you, Master Branstone," haughtily spoken, Richard Cheeke left the goldsmith's shop, and prepared to put his scheme into execution.



## CHAPTER X.

## AT STRATTON.

STRATTON HOUSE in Hampshire was the favourite home of Rachel, Lady Russell. She had inherited it from her father, Lord Southampton, and many memories of childhood and youth were connected with it. Her happy life there with her children, in the full enjoyment of the country pleasures which are unknown in the town, was unbroken for the last year of her married life. Here she welcomed her husband from London, when he came to refresh mind and body after the business and turmoil of the Court and Parliament, with an ever-increasing joy. For Lord Russell always seemed to leave care behind him when he rode up to the old porch of Stratton House, where his wife and little girls were sure to be awaiting him. The clatter of his horse's feet, as he rode quickly up the drive shaded by the fir trees, which flourish so well in Hampshire, was always heard by Lady Russell long before the welcome sound reached other ears.

It was a glowing September day when Lady Russell started from the table, where she was seated at dinner with her three children, celebrating together their father's birthday.

"Hearken!" she said. "There are riders coming near. Maybe it is your father, 'little master'; I knew



he would come, if it were possible, on this happy day. Come, let us find out if this be true."

Her children were not unwilling to follow their mother down the wide stairs, little Wriothsesley shouting with all his might:

"Papa! papa!"

But disappointment was in store—a disappointment Lady Russell could not conceal when the horseman drew up before the open door, and Richard Cheeke threw himself from the saddle; giving his horse into the charge of a groom, he bent his knee, and, kissing Lady Russell's hand, hastened to say, in answer to her question:

"All is well with my Lord. I saw him yesterday. It is no business of his, on which I have ridden hither."

Lady Russell was greatly relieved by this assurance, and said:

"Welcome then, good Richard. You are in time for the birthday dinner to which the children are eager to return. Throw off your riding-coat and join us in drinking my lord's health."

"You are ever very good to me, madam," Richard said. "I will do as you desire, and refrain from opening my business till after dinner, though, forsooth, a dusty, heated traveller, like your humble servant, is scarce fit to sit at your ladyship's board."

The two girls, and "little master," as his parents called their son, were impatient to return to dinner, and servants being at hand to take Richard's dusty cloak, and conduct him to a quiet chamber for the refreshment of washing his travel-soiled hands, Lady Russell led the children back, saying:



"Follow us, Richard, when you are a little rested from what must have been a very hard ride, to judge by the looks of both horse and master."

Richard bowed in assent, and the mother and children returned to the red deer pie, of which delicacy, in honour of their father's birthday, they were allowed to partake. When Richard at last appeared, with his love-locks combed and smoothed, and his heavy riding-cloak no longer covering the suit of plum-coloured velvet which he had worn under it, he looked more fitted to join the little party at dinner. He did full justice to the red deer pie, and made a pretty speech before pledging the health of William, Lord Russell, in the grace-cup which was passed round.

"'Little master' can scarcely, by burying his face in it, get a good sip," his mother said. "Help your brother, Rachel, by lifting the cup higher."

Then the grace-cup went round again, Lady Russell saying:

"This to the health of the dearest and best of husbands and fathers."

"Best father!" shouted little Wriothsesley, and the two girls said, in a quaint, demure fashion: "To the health of our dear father," Rachel adding: "And we wish he was here."

Her mother laid her hand tenderly on Rachel's fair head, saying:

"Ay, sweetheart, we will all echo that wish."

As soon as the dinner was over the children went off to feed their white pigeons, Catherine saying:

"May we pick up some russet apples in the orchard for Goody Palmer, mother?"



"Yes, dear heart," was the reply. "But I fear apples will be hard for Goody Palmer's teeth to eat, so get Nurse to ask in the buttery for a jug of broth to carry with them."

The children skipped away, Catherine saying: "I shall tell Goody the feast is in honour of papa's birthday."

"Dear little ones!" Lady Russell said, as the children disappeared. "Now, Richard, let us have our converse in the summer parlour at the end of the terrace, for although it is Michaelmas Day it is yet meet weather for a summer parlour."

Lady Russell then preceded Richard along a passage panelled with oak, to a glass door. This door opened on a short flight of stone steps, which led on to a terrace of smooth turf commanding a view of peaceful meadow land and gentle undulations, crowned with woods now beginning to show the varied hues of autumn, the brilliant patches of yellow contrasting with the deep green of many of the branches, which were yet clothed in their summer dress.

Stratton was the ideal of an English mansion, surrounded by its far-stretching park, where a piece of water, on which swans were pluming their snowy breasts in the golden sunshine of the September day, shimmered in the light.

The summer parlour commanded an extensive view, and Lady Russell said:

"You will not wonder, Richard, that so fair a home is dear to me. Ah! how dear! I look forward to happy days when, retired from the turmoil of Court and Parliament, my dear lord and I shall pass here



many blissful hours of peace." Then she added: "If it be God's holy will. In this changing world one must needs remember that as all good things come from Him, so it is His to give them, and His to take away what He has given."

A shade of sadness passed over Lady Russell's sweet face, and there was a momentary pause, which Richard did not break, till Lady Russell said, in her usually bright, cheerful voice:

"What brought you hither, Richard? I crave pardon for being so long in coming to the point. I am longing to hear what you have to tell me about affairs in London. My lord is not so explicit as I could wish; but first of your own business."

"My business, madam, is to lay before you the trouble that has overtaken the honest goldsmith Ethelbert Jenkyns. He was suspected and watched, and he, like many others, has left this country, intending, so I believe, to begin business at the Hague. But—"

"But what of his daughter—that sweet child Faith, who nursed my young kinsman with so great a devotion?"

"Ah, madam, there lies the strangest part of the story. Her father, on leaving her, put her under the care of one Branstone, her cousin, who has, worse luck, conceived a desperate passion for her. He arranged her marriage with this stiff-backed, arrogant Puritan, and one of those whining ministers was to have joined their hands on the night of the old man's departure. But Faith rebelled and showed a proper spirit. It will not greatly surprise you to hear of the love-passages which have passed betwixt Louis de Massué and his



cousin. In my presence Faith resolutely refused to give her hand when her heart went not with it. But she was equally resolute not to bring down her father's anger by marriage with Louis. By some unexplained mischance a letter he wrote her, praying her to take flight with him, and her old serving-maid, and his sister Clémence to Canterbury, where his mother and another sister still abide by the Dean's goodness, never reached her. The villain whom I paid to deliver it must have played me false. He pretended the answer which Louis prayed for was given, and was the one word "No;" but it was a lie. No letter reached Faith Jenkyns, and no answer was given. Forsooth, there are hundreds of villains who live by false swearing, and I doubt not the man or boy I employed was one. He pocketed my gold piece and made off, the young varlet! This is a long story wherewith to trouble you, madam, but I crave your patience to the end."

"I am all attention, Richard. Do not mistrust it."

"There is yet another name which I must needs mention in this troublous story. From the first moment I saw Clémence, the fair and most lovely sister of Louis de Massué, I loved her. Ah! madam, I see you start with surprise. You know full well I am unworthy to win so pure and beautiful a lady; yet so it is. I could gladly die for her if need arose."

Richard's handsome face, generally so smiling and beaming with easy good-nature, was now working with snppressed emotion. The gracious lady at his side put her hand gently on his.

"Say rather, Richard, you will live for Clémence—



live to prove the reality of your love by a new and better manner of life."

"I have striven to do so, madam. I have hated the old life for her sake. But I fear my suit is hopeless. I enclosed in Louis's sheet a billet from myself, addressed to Clémence. Like the larger document, that too must be lost by that villain. I could almost dare to hope she might look with favour on me. At our last meeting it seemed so. But, however that may be, I came to urge a humble petition—that you would number her amongst your ladies in the household, and so give her a shelter. My Lord has acted a kindly part for Louis. I heard from Branstone, the goldsmith's nephew—who has laid hands on the business, and would fain do the same with Mistress Faith—that she went with Clémence and the old serving-maid, and his little wild sister Esther to Canterbury, starting in the stage at daybreak yesterday. I would humbly entreat of you, madam, to empower me with a message from yourself to your kinswoman Clémence, and permit me to offer her, in your name, a place in your household. Is it too much to ask?"

"Nay, Richard; but I cannot move in any matter of importance without conferring with my lord. I have a scheme, which has developed as we have sat here, for the relief not only of my sweet kinswoman Clémence, but also for that dear child, the goldsmith's daughter. Nay," Lady Russell said, "she shall not be forced into a marriage with a man she loves not. Let her be patient, and a safe escort will be found to take her to the Hague. The Princess Mary is ever gracious to me, and I will set on foot negotiations which may result in



her accepting her as one of her ladies-in-waiting. For Madame de Massué I scarce know what to propose, but we will put the case before my lord. We expect him on the morrow; the coach is to be sent to meet him at Basingstoke. When I heard your horse's hoofs I thought my lord had ridden hither to greet me on his birthday—that blessed day to me, when so true and noble a man first saw the light. It is a grand day for entrance into the world—those who are born on it are surely under the special care of the good angels.”

“How so, madam?” Richard Cheeke asked. “Methinks it would have been well had I been born on this day. My angels have been evil rather than good hitherto. But what have angels to do with the twenty-ninth day of September?”

“You do not heed the calendar in your Book of Common Prayer, Richard, or you would see that this day is the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels. I read the Collect, and Epistle, and Gospel with my household this morning, and, as my ‘little master’ looked up at me from his seat in Rachel’s lap, I thought verily their angels do behold the face of their Father which is in Heaven.”

But Richard Cheeke could not follow Lady Russell as she said this. Till very recently he had hitherto been utterly unthinking and careless. He heard, as everyone did in those times, great stress laid on the difference between Papists and Protestants, between the Separatists and those who were faithful sons of the Church. But he had cared for none of these things as a personal concern. He lounged into the Temple Church occasionally, and once or twice had got admittance to



the Royal Chapel at Whitehall, not to heed prayers or sermons, but to take notice of the women in the Royal pew, and to pick out one or another as the handsomest or ugliest, the most highly-painted and bedizened, or perhaps one amongst them who trusted to her natural charms without attempting to heighten them—or rather conceal them—by rouge, powder, and patches.

It is not too much to say that, since Lady Russell had extended her friendship to Richard Cheeke, a change had come over his tastes and inclinations. All that was pure and lovely and of good report now possessed a charm for him. In the society at Southampton House, which was varied and often brilliant, all the fulsome flatteries which the courtiers of the time seemed to think it necessary to address to women, all the covert allusions and familiarities which passed current in the Court, were discouraged. Indeed, those who were inclined to think Lady Russell stiff and over-fastidious, respected her, and a gentle rebuke, or a look of cold disapproval to any man or woman, who overstepped the boundary line between levity and innocent gaiety, was seldom, if ever, necessary a second time. It was when under her influence that Richard saw Clémence de Massué for the first time, and in her he seemed to find the ideal towards which he had almost unconsciously been led by his intercourse with Lady Russell.

“I will consult my lord,” Lady Russell said, after a pause, during which Richard Cheeke had been looking out on the fair scene before him, waiting for a more direct promise that his wishes about Clémence should be carried out. “You will remain our guest to-



night, and as soon as my lord can give a few minutes to the consideration of your scheme, you shall know our decision. But now, tell me—you have come straight from London—how fares it with our party? How do you think it stands with my lord?”

“The election of the sheriffs has, no doubt, madam, been a victory of the King over the people. There was a great uproar ten days ago, when the Court candidate, Rich, was put up. There was so loud a cry and noise of ‘No Rich,’ that nothing could be heard. The Lord Mayor had, as you know, nominated Dudley North, but at the poll the major part of the livery had voted for the people’s men, Papillon and Dubois. It was in this tumult that Master Jenkyns was advised to flee the country. None are safe amongst the citizens who dare to say this business, as to the election of sheriffs, is unlawful. The poll has been set aside, and it is rumoured that on this very day the two Court candidates will take possession of their offices. Of this, doubtless, my Lord will fully apprise you on his return on the morrow.”

“I doubt if he will do so,” Lady Russell said, with a sigh. “He is ever heedful to keep from me matters that may disquiet me. But I must needs hear of them, or how can I be of use in any poor advice I may give? He has too great confidence in some of his friends, and I know the more violent amongst them would go lengths to which he would never proceed. I tremble sometimes for my noble husband, who will always hold to what he deems right, and yet, I fear, not always with the discretion and calm judgment which, God knoweth, is needful in these troubled times. But, good Richard,”



Lady Russell said, with a smile, "I know your thoughts wander to the fair Clémence, with her sweet, serious face and gentle voice, with the pretty accent of my mother's country, which is, I confess, like music in my ears, and in yours also, I doubt not. Well, I will try to do as you wish, but you must be patient, and do not break the matter hastily to my lord; leave me to do this."

Richard had to possess his soul in patience through the next day. It did not escape him that Lord Russell was more silent than usual, and that he and Lady Russell were continually together, and seemed to desire no interruption from those around them. It was a large household at Stratton, though not so large as that at Southampton House; and Richard Cheeke wandered about the place, visiting dairy and poultry-yard, stables and farm-buildings, accompanied by the gentlemen who were in charge of the several departments. The hawks were under the care of a lively young sportsman, who lamented that Lord Russell so seldom now had a good day's sport with them.

Guests, too, arrived in the course of the day. Several were bidden to dinner and to remain till supper, and Richard began to despair that his business would ever gain attention. Lady Russell was always an early riser, and before the dew was off the grass the next morning she had been out with her children to drink milk, warm from the cow, and to look into the affairs of the dairy and poultry-yard. Richard met the happy party of mother and children on the terrace, and Lady Russell, bidding him a good morning, said:

"My lord will meet me here ere long. I have let



him know what you desire, and I think he is inclined to grant your request."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the three children, Rachel and Catherine holding little Wriothesly by the hand, ran towards the foot of the stone stairs to greet their father. He raised "little master" in his arms, and, kissing him, said:

"Good morning to the 'little master,' and to my two maidens, who look like roses washed by the dew. Ah! Richard, how fares it with you? I had scarce time to have speech with you yesterday, but we will have a talk on the matter my wife has laid before me, as we pace up and down, to get a good appetite before we break our fast."

As he spoke a horseman was seen galloping up the drive. A letter, addressed "Haste, post haste," was a few minutes later delivered to Lord Russell by a servant.

"From the good Dean!" Lord Russell exclaimed, as he broke the seal and untwisted the cord which fastened the letter.

Lord Russell read the contents with his brow knit as if in deep thought. Lady Russell, who had received the "little master" from his father, whimpering that he wanted to "ride a cock-horse on papa's shoulder," now bid Rachel and Catherine take him to the house and go to the nurseries for their breakfast. She asked no questions while her husband read and re-read the letter, but presently she put her arm through his, and he, bending down, kissed her forehead, saying:

"We must give our attention to Richard now, dear heart. Nay, why look so anxious?"



"But one question—to be easy answered by ay or no. Does the Dean send good news?"

"Ay, and no. His letter is full of well-meant counsels, but little news. I knew ere he told me that the two sheriffs chosen illegally, one by open violence, were in possession of their offices. It is but a straw to show which way the wind blows, and shows that a fair hearing and fair trial by juries chosen by men like North and Rich, will be, till justice flourishes again, hopeless. The Duke of York's return, greedy for moneys, is another such straw. But let us dismiss these troublesome matters, so out of harmony with this fair scene of peace and plenty," Lord Russell said, turning sharply round to Richard, his wife's hand clasped in his. "This special pleader has succeeded in gaining your cause. I am ready that she should take her young kinswoman into her household, and I will permit the mother and the other sister to inhabit a small house within a stone's-throw. The keeper of the deer has lately quitted it for a larger place, he having taken to himself a wife, and become the father of two strong boys."

"And Faith Jenkyns, dear heart—what of her?"

"Ah, that matter must be deferred till I get direct communication from the Hague, and discover the Princess's mind. Meanwhile let her take up her abode here till such time as I can put things in train to send her to her father."

"But, till that time arrives, I may have her in my household, dear husband? She is a sweet maiden. I call her and Clémence a pair of turtle-doves, so gentle and loving are they."

"It is indeed a true picture of them both," Richard



said. "But never, sure, was there a stronger will if needs must, than Faith Jenkyns can show she possesses, as that fellow Branstone can testify. All honour to her for standing out against him."

"And the fair Clémence—is she also as obdurate, Richard? Keep in mind that faint heart never won fair lady," Lord Russell said, smiling as he turned away with Lady Russell towards the great hall where breakfast was served, and prayers read by the chaplain, who lived in the house and was the curate in charge of the village of Stratton.

Richard Cheeke lost no time in ordering his horse to be ready, and was on his road to Canterbury before the sun was high in the heavens, the bearer, as he hoped, of good news, which would relieve the anxiety which Clémence felt and often expressed as to her mother's condition. But Richard's errand did not prove as pleasant as he expected, when he dismounted on the morning of the following day at the Chequers Inn, and was received with a hearty welcome by Mistress Bunce. The good landlady was as talkative as ever, and declared that the worrits and cranks in which "Madame Massé" indulged were enough to drive her children crazy.

"It's time other folk came," she said, "to help Mistress Clarice with her mother. I was right glad when I saw the two young gentlewomen get out of the stage a few days ago. They brought along with 'em an old body, whose tongue is like the clapper of a bell, and I only hope she will talk to Madame to some pur-



pose. She is more like a spoiled brat than a grown woman who will never see her forties again, though she makes believe to be scarce over thirty. As if with a son and two daughters grown to man and women we were such fools as to take that for gospel!" and Mistress Bunce laughed a scornful laugh of incredulity. "She called me that 'old woman;' I heard her. Why, I'll warrant she is not far behind me in years, and I'm glad I ain't a namby-pamby creature like her, that looks as if a puff of wind would blow her over the Cathedral towers. Well-a-day, I wish you joy, Master Cheeke, of your business with Madame. If she proves agreeable to your plan—well, my name's not Charity Bunce."

Mistress Bunce had certainly taken a fairly just view of Madame de Massué.

When Richard Cheeke unfolded Lord Russell's plan that she should live in a cottage on the Stratton estate, rent free, she declared she would not go and bury herself in the country with a set of rustics. She would go to London, and only to London. What had her brother gone away for? He was very hard-hearted never to wish to set eyes on his poor sister, left a young widow-woman and unprotected. Her son gone, too; no one cared what became of her!

"Why didn't Faith Jenkyns marry the well-to-do young man who had offered her a home? Then she could have had a shelter under her brother's roof—for she heard from Abigail it was still his house—where he meant his poor sister to live, she was sure!"

"What is to be done?" Richard asked of Clarice, who followed him out of the little parlour.

"The Dean is in Canterbury," Clarice said, pulling



her hood over her head. "I will seek his counsel. Come with me, Master Cheeke."

As they passed through the precincts, where the yellow leaves were fluttering one by one to the ground, Clarice saw the forerunners of the shower which would soon make the branches bare.

"I have heard from Clémence of your suit. Do not despair, Master Cheeke—you will win her yet."

"That is good hearing," Richard replied, "but is it not too favourable a view you take? I fear me I am not good enough for such a saint as your sister."

"It will be for her benefit," Clarice said briefly, "to be wedded to one who loves her. She is too nun-like. She has passed many long hours in yonder grand church since she arrived here. For my part I find the precincts a trifle too solemn, and I cannot say my prayers all day long, as Clémence can—I've need to do so," she added, "for it has been a somewhat weariful life since we came hither. My hopes are setting in the direction of the Hague. I would fain go thither with old Abigail and Faith and have a little jollity at the Court to which Louis is to be attached, and where we should find, on that score, easy entrance. And I hear the Princess Mary loves to gather round her English maidens." Then laughing, she said: "I am half French, I know, but you would scarce notice it in my speech now."

The Dean received his visitors with his accustomed kindness, and listened while Richard Cheeke told him of the proposal made by Lord and Lady Russell. Nothing, he thought, could be better; and he added:

"In sooth, I must soon withdraw the loan of the house in the precincts; it is needed for the residence of



an usher in the King's school. Thus there seems to me naught to prevent my Lord Russell's proposition being a timely help to Madame de Massué."

"We find it hard," Clarice said, "to persuade my mother to leave Canterbury: that is to say, she desires to go to London, but, my uncle having fled from the disorders in the city to take refuge at the Hague, we cannot agree to this scheme. The house and all it contains is now in the possession of one Edward Branstone, who is not of kin to us, being the nephew of my uncle's wife. My Lord Russell offers a house at Stratton for our accommodation, and we would fain urge my mother to close with this kindness. But—" and Clarice sighed—"it looks as if we should plead with her in vain. What is your counsel, sir? I will strive to follow it, whatever it may be."

"I would say," the Dean replied, "that London, with all its tumults and discontents, is no place for those who can avoid it. The house at Stratton would be a safe retreat, if indeed any place is safe in these times. My counsel is this: set aside all obstacles and hindrances, and make for Stratton with your mother and sister, taking Mistress Jenkyns, the goldsmith's daughter, with you. You have the energy to carry out any plan, Mistress Clarice—bring it to bear now; and, not forgetting your duty to a mother, act promptly, and proceed to accept the proposal made by your gracious kinswoman, Lady Russell."

"I will do my utmost, sir; and with the help of our good friend, Master Richard Cheeke, I hope to accomplish what looks now a vastly difficult undertaking."

"Use two weapons which will not fail you in this



or any other extremity," the Dean said. "Prayer, and faith that God will hear your petition for guidance and help."

Richard Cheeke had remained silent while the Dean and Clarice had been speaking. He now said:

"I will strive, sir, to assist Mistress Clarice in her journey, and I will serve her and her sister to my life's end." Then with an effort, yet speaking with manly decision, Richard said: "I am a humble suitor for the hand of Mistress Clémence de Massué, and though at present I cannot say she altogether favours my suit, yet I will hope on and never despair of winning at last so great a prize."

The Dean was always full of kindly sympathy with the young; and he had, perhaps, a secret relish for love stories, so he smiled kindly on Richard and, laying his hand on his shoulder, he said:

"A prize, indeed, Mistress Clémence will prove, I would say. Go forward and win her; and further let me say, prove worthy if you do win."

"God helping me, sir, I will so prove," Richard said.

After this the Dean talked much of the affairs of the country and the tumult in the city. It was plain that he was full of concern about his friends at Stratton, for he said:

"Lord Russell is ever honest and unsuspecting, but I fear me he is surrounded with spies who will, if occasion offers, work his ruin. He is true to his principles, and all honour be to him! But he knows nothing of caution, and may be caught in a net laid for him by his enemies, or worse, by false friends, any day. I am returning to London ere long and I shall note which



way the wind blows, and with good Dr. Burnet's help try to insist on my Lord being more careful of those who feign loyalty to him, and are, I sometimes think, but traitors in the camp."

When Clarice and Richard Cheeke left the Deanery they met Faith Jenkyns hastening towards them.

"Edward Branstone is come inquiring for his sister. He thinks she left London with us. What can have become of her? She did not leave the house with us, though Abigail says she saw her crouching in the passage as we crept downstairs. Come quick, Clarice, and you too, Master Cheeke, and do not suffer him to hold us as guilty of his sister's disappearance. We know naught of it, poor wilful child!"

"The villain—to follow you!" Richard Cheeke exclaimed. "I will make short work with him."

"Oh, I prithee, Richard," Clarice said, "let us have no brawling. Sure we had our lesson to avoid it when our brother Louis interfered for Faith's protection. Though his wound is healed, yet when I saw him, on the day he came to bid us farewell, I found him sadly changed, and methinks he had a deeper wound than a sword-thrust—harder to bear because given by the hand he loved."

"Oh, Clarice, you are cruel—too cruel!" Faith exclaimed. "Do you think I have no secret pain to bear? How could I know that his pleading letter, of which Master Cheeke tells, had ever been penned? I never had it, or at least he should have known that if duty kept me back from granting his request, at least love was strong. Ah me! how strong within me."

"Nay, Faith," Clarice said, "do not deem me cruel.





But Louis's face, as he departed hence for Dover, is ever before me. My bright, happy brother was changed into a sad, thoughtful man, who bid me say to you when we met that the sun of his life had set, and that without you he cared not what became of him."

Then, as Clarice put her hand into her cousin's, Faith whispered:

"I am a coward now. I thought I was brave, but I do fear Edward Branstone. He has vowed to have and to hold me, with my will or against it."

"There are two words to that, Mistress Jenkyns," Richard said. "Fear not. Turn a brave front to him and leave me to do the rest."

"I dread to see him again. His eyes are so fierce and—"

"You shall not see him again!" Clarice exclaimed. "I have a plan to prevent it. Come with me to the Deanery. I will ask Madam Tillotson to protect you; she and the Dean have ever been good to me; let us turn thither at once."

"An excellent plan!" Richard exclaimed, and before another word could be said he had gone quickly to the house, where Clémence was awaiting him.

A stormy interview followed. Edward Branstone refused to believe that nothing was known of his sister, and charged Richard with decoying her from her home, saying:

"You are too well known, Master Cheeke, as one of those fellows who prey on the credulity of weak women. Where is my sister hidden? I will track her out and bring you to shame—if indeed such an ungodly man can know what shame is!"



"You bring a lying accusation against me. You shall answer for this," Richard shouted, his hand on his sword.

Edward Branstone did not flinch. He said, with a coolness that was maddening:

"I am a Christian, and draw not the sword against any man. Put back your weapon and hear me."

Richard was ready to seize on Edward, and clenched his fist in a tumult of rage and indignation; but Clémence clasped both hands on his arm, and said:

"Nay, Richard, forbear. My mother is ill able to encounter a brawl. Abigail is detaining her in her chamber, but if the noise of these angry voices reaches her she will be ill and scared. Forbear, I pray you!" she added, "for my sake."

In a moment the lion within Richard was tamed. He became quiet, and saying, "For your sake!" he folded his arms, and looking Edward Branstone in the face, he said:

"Hear me, sir. We know naught of your sister, and—" as the door opened—"here is a witness to prove it."

Old Abigail came up to Edward Branstone, and laying her hand on his arm she said, with something of pity in her voice:

"Master Edward, I've known you from a child. Did you ever hear me tell a lie? Come now, answer that question."

"I do not accuse you of lying," Edward said.

"No, nor no one else, I hope. Your poor, little, ill-conditioned sister was breaking her silly heart for love of one I know. If she left your house it was not in our

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company; and I'll warrant when she is found it will not be in this country. I say no more—I have said enough. There! here comes the poor lady—you have just scared her out of her wits."

"What does it mean? What ill news is it?" Madame de Massué said, throwing herself helplessly into Clémence's arms.

"It means naught of ill news for us, mother, but Edward Branstone's young sister is missing."

"Oh! Edward Branstone," Madame de Massué said, "take me under your roof, with my poor, homeless girls. My brother would have been willing, but he has forsaken me."

"Madam," Edward Branstone said, in his slow, deliberate voice, "I understood you were too feeble in health to make the journey to London when your son lay ill. I am in no position, till my marriage is concluded, to receive any guest. When Faith Jenkyns has obeyed her father's orders I may provide a chamber for you. Till such time, the moneys agreed will be paid to you; and now I demand an interview with Faith Jenkyns."

"And that you cannot have, sir," said Richard, "in this house. If you persist in seeing her you may repair to the Priory, where the Dean, Dr. Tillotson, abides. Mistress Jenkyns will but repeat what she has already said to you, and the Dean will support her in her determination to reject your suit—and let this suffice."

Edward Branstone turned sharply round on Richard, and said:

"Your advice was neither sought nor desired, Richard



Cheeke. Look to your own suit, which is, methinks, hopeless; for what fellowship hath light with darkness, or what concord has Christ with Belial?"

"Favour us with no more of your Scriptural knowledge, sir," Richard Cheeke said. "'Tis a pity such knowledge has had no good effect on your actions."

For a moment it seemed as if the storm was about to burst forth again, but Clémence's gentle, detaining hand restrained Richard Cheeke from making any further retort; and with a stiff nod of his head, which could hardly be called a bow, Edward Branstone strode out of the house, muttering something about "shaking the dust off his feet as a testimony against those whom he left there."

Richard Cheeke was rewarded for his efforts in behalf of Lady Russell's kinsfolk when, a week later, he had safely conducted them to Stratton. Clarice was received into Lady Russell's household, with Faith Jenkyns, while Clémence and her mother, with old Abigail, were placed in the cottage within the limits of the park. Clémence insisted on her sister being relieved from the long attendance on her mother; and now, as Richard Cheeke's promised wife, she seemed to have thrown off much of the sadness which, while she was undecided, had overshadowed her. Lady Russell encouraged her to grant Richard's persistent, yet always respectful suit, and as soon as he could make arrangements with his father, Clémence had promised to marry him. But this could not be yet. Richard was to return to his chambers in the Temple, with the determination to prosecute his law studies there with diligence. The



stimulus of Clémence's love quickened him in his efforts; but Lady Russell, when she saw him so full of joyful hope for the future, did not fail to urge him to remember that, in the midst of London life, the old temptations would assail him, and that there was something more needed than Clémence's love to keep him in the straight path.

"These are difficult and dangerous times, Richard," Lady Russell said. "Be not too confident. There are words I would fain have you graven on your heart: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

And Richard Cheeke replied:

"Whatever falls out, dear lady, if I stand an honourable man, fitted in some measure to take Clémence into my keeping, I shall owe my happiness to *you*, who first showed me what was pure and lovely in woman, and made me loathe all the shameful licence of the Court, in which before I had been so blind as to rejoice."

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## CHAPTER XI.

## CONFESSIONS.

1682-3. The winter of this year and the early spring of 1683 passed away peacefully at Stratton, and Madame de Massué was consoled, in what she called her banishment amongst rustics, by the frequent visits she paid to the great house of Stratton, where hospitality was freely extended to the numerous members of the noble families of Southampton and Bedford.

Like all women of a weak nature Madame de Massué delighted in display, and rejoiced to count up the titled people who noticed her at Stratton; while she built many castles in the air about her two daughters.

Richard Cheeke might be superseded if a more distinguished suitor presented himself, for Clémence and her brilliant sister Clarice were sure to captivate the son of an earl, and it might even be of a duke.

The letters received at intervals from Louis at the Hague satisfied her maternal vanity. Louis was evidently in the highest places at the Court, and his description of the splendour of the entertainments in the Orange Hall made his mother happy with their reflected glory. Madame de Massué delighted to read the accounts of the balls in this Orange Hall, which



blazed on every side with the bright colouring of Jordans and Honthorst.

"He has sure forgotten Faith Jenkyns by this time. It is notable that he never mentions her name. For my part I do not greatly desire my niece for my daughter-in-law. Louis must look higher."

"Louis could not look higher, my mother," Clémence said one day, when she sat at the delicate embroidery she was working for the hem of a satin robe for Lady Russell. "Faith is far above any woman my brother may meet in Holland or in England."

"The folly of you, child, to talk in that manner! Your brother is worthy of the grandest lady in the land. He will be at the top of the ladder ere long, and then he will send for us; and for *your* sakes I could cross the sea again, even if it went near to kill me," Madame de Massué said, with the grand air of self-sacrifice which stood her in good stead when she had a selfish end in view.

Perhaps there never was a mother to whom her children owed less; and yet she received from them the love and devotion which mothers who make their daughters' wishes their first study and care do not always win. It is one of the strange anomalies of life, that the strongest affection is felt by those who confer the benefit rather than by those who receive it. This applies to a weak and, in the eyes of many, a foolish mother like Madame de Massué. It was beautiful to see how Clémence and Clarice covered her failings with ready tact, and were always ready to give up their own pleasure for her sake. It had been the same with Louis, and nothing ever tempted him to speak disrespectfully



of his mother to others, though, as we know, he sometimes lost his patience with her when he was provoked by her vanity and eager desire to cling to the garments of her departing youth.

Lady Russell was always kind and courteous to Madame de Massué, but she avoided any very close intercourse with her; and the result was that the widow of her distant relative called her "proud as a peacock, and stiff and starched as if she were forsooth my Lady Abbess, and expected everyone about her to be as prim and high and mighty as herself!"

Faith Jenkyns was no favourite with her aunt and she never lost an opportunity of descanting to her, of Louis's high position at the Hague, and of how the Princess Mary had skated with him on the ice that winter, and how he had made a friendship, no doubt, with many ladies of high rank. He would doubtless bring a wife to England who would be able to give his sisters a fine standing in Whitehall, for it was not likely that they would be buried alive at Stratton for the rest of their days. To all this Faith would listen without saying a word. In her secret heart she did wonder at Louis's silence. If by this time he knew she had never received his letter of entreaty it was strange that he had not made any further communication to her. She had received two letters from her father, who had, it seemed, established himself in business at the Hague, and was flourishing beyond his expectations. He wrote as if expecting to hear that Faith had repented of her disobedience, and perhaps, before the letter reached her, was reinstated in the old home, to which in better times he might return if his life was spared.



No tidings had been received of the lost Esther; and Abigail would shake her head if Esther were mentioned, and say she would sooner hear she was dead than in the jaws of some wolf who had made the poor lamb an easy prey; adding, "Poor, foolish child! I can't but grieve for her, for with all her wicked ways she was a winning creature at times."

The duties in Lady Russell's household, which devolved on her ladies, were made easy and pleasant by her kindness, and the gentle, if firm sway which she held over them. Faith's skill with her needle, and sweet voice in reading aloud, and singing the hymns of her people, made her a favourite companion of her mistress; while Clarice, bright and clever, was of great use in the still-room and buttery. She could superintend the preparation of dainty dishes, and make lighter pasties than any of the staff of servants in the kitchen department. She acted also as a governess to the two little girls, and taught them to speak pure French, and sing many little *chansons* which she had learned in her Picardy home.

It became apparent, as the February days lengthened and the signs of awakening life were seen in the pleasance and large domain of vegetable and herb garden at Stratton, that Lady Russell was more and more occupied with affairs in which the household had no part. Lord Russell's occasional visits were looked forward to with feverish anxiety; and he was often closeted with Lady Russell for hours in earnest conferences from which both husband and wife came out to take what seemed their chief solace, the society of their children.



But even the children noticed a change. "Grave father!" Catherine said one day, "he will not play ball with me now in the hall, nor shuttle-cock, nor any pastimes."

Then, evidently with a great effort, Lord Russell roused himself, and taking Catherine's hand said, one day:

"Come away then, little maiden, and call thy sister, and 'little master,' and we will have a fine game ere the light fades."

"And Mistress Faith, and Clarice, and our mother also?"

"Nay, child, not thy mother. She is busy with her pen and must not be disturbed."

Clarice answered the summons, saying Faith was with her Lady and could not be spared, but she was ready to play ball or any other game; for she loved a little pastime dearly.

Soon the old hall resounded with merry laughter; and then Clarice took the viol, on which she played with light and skilful fingers, and the little girls raised their sweet, childish voices and sang with her several of the French ditties she had taught them.

Lord Russell watched his children, and listened with pride to their performance, saying:

"Mistress Clarice has my thanks for teaching my little daughters to sing so well."

"And now come and dance, father," Catherine said. "Mistress Clarice will play the sarabande, and we will show you how to step out, father; come!"

"Nay, nay; I will watch the dance with 'little master,'" Lord Russell said, seating himself on the large



oak chair on the dais at the end of the hall, taking the boy on his knee, and looking down at his little girls' graceful movements with a somewhat wistful expression in his eyes. What made him press his child closer to him as, tired with his game, the "little master" leaned his head on his father's shoulder, and, closing his eyes, fell into a light slumber?

Two or three of the upper servants, who had come into the lower end of the large hall to be spectators of the dance, looked at their lord as he sat with the "little master" on his knee; and his faithful personal attendant, Taunton, who had taken a position behind his master's chair, heard him murmur:

"Sweet boy, may you never wake to trouble and bewilderment as your father awakes at every day-dawn in these times." Then, turning to the man, he said, smiling: "Didst hear my soliloquy, good Taunton? Echo my wish, nay, turn it into a prayer for the 'little master,' who, forsooth, is a heavy handful when he lies heavy with sleep on one arm—a weight his mother, I warrant, never feels too much!"

Lady Russell was in her chamber, where she was sitting with Faith, whom she employed to transcribe a letter she had written to her uncle, the Marquis de Ruvigny. The task was finished now, and, bidding Faith put aside the quills and paper, Lady Russell leaned back in her chair, and said:

"I shall accompany my lord to Southampton House to-morrow. I will leave certain papers of which I desire a copy in your hands, Faith. Dear child," she said, when Faith had done her bidding and placed all the papers and letters in order, "come hither. There, sit



down on that stool and tell me—do I appear so much filled with my own concerns as to be heedless of yours? Is there still no word from my young kinsman, Louis de Massué?”

“He has sent two letters—nay, three—to his mother, madam.”

“And no word to you?”

“No special word—no word that I crave to have. He only said, ‘My dutiful service to my cousin, Faith Jenkyns.’ Such words are poor, and but cold comfort.”

“It is passing strange,” Lady Russell said. “Even if he is hurt at your giving no answer to his letter he must needs know from Richard Cheeke that you never received it. Richard has written to him to this effect, for he has told me so. Does not your father name him in his letters to you?”

“No, madam, never!”

“I wish I could do aught to relieve your burden, child,” Lady Russell said, stroking Faith’s cheek. “But I scarce know how to set about it. There is one comfort in the thought that your importunate suitor has ceased to trouble you since you came hither. Has he had any news of his sister?”

“Nay, madam; or if he has we know nought of it. The poor child! I would gladly be assured that she was dead rather than fallen into the snares which are likely set for her. Sometimes I think she had designed to ride with us to Canterbury that day, and then missed her way in the streets when trying to follow us. It is certain that she did not leave the house with us, fearing discovery perhaps.”



"Hearken! there are sounds from the great hall," Lady Russell said. "The children are making merry. I must go and join them—care must not be suffered to make us selfish!"

"Does the care grow more pressing, dear Lady?" Faith ventured to ask.

"I fear me it does. My Lord Shaftesbury has left his creatures behind him, who are lying and plotting to entangle honest men in their toils; but sure there is some one arriving below—I must hasten thither."

When Lady Russell reached the hall she found a messenger had arrived from her husband's father, Lord Bedford, with despatches of importance. Lord Russell was scanning a paper, with his brow knit and his hand still holding "little master," who awoke from his sleep, clung to his father, and began to cry. When Lady Russell appeared the child ran to her; she raised him in her arms and comforted him, Rachel saying:

"Wriothsley has been asleep. Father set him down on a sudden, and he awoke in a fright."

"Send the children away," Lord Russell said, "with Mistress Clarice, and come with me to my chamber." Then turning to his servant, Taunton, he said: "See the man and his horse are rested and well fed, and make ready for my departure with my Lady to-morrow."

Lady Russell put her hand within her husband's arm; and, as they left the hall together, Clarice noticed that Lord Russell bent down and kissed his wife.

"It is ill news, I am sure," Clarice thought. "I must seek Faith and find out if she has heard aught. She has been with my Lady all the forenoon, and again since dinner."



As soon as Lord Russell was alone with his wife he said:

"News has come from Holland that Lord Shaftesbury is dead. My father writes to give me early intimation of the fact."

"That is sad news, dear heart; may God have mercy on his soul!" Lady Russell exclaimed, adding, "but scarce ill news for us!"

"Poor man, he has need of mercy—deserted by those he trusted—with what measure he meted out to others it has been measured out to him again. But, sweet wife, it seems that those two creatures, Rumsey and Ferguson, are at work, and my good father bids me take heed of my Lord Howard."

"Lord Howard! nay, sure, he is not a traitor."

"He seems very near to be such. My father hints that what passed at Shepherd's wine vaults is reported, and that my name is mentioned."

"But what if it be so mentioned," Lady Russell said; "you have no part or lot with men like those who were there assembled."

"That may be, and is true. God knoweth I have no evil intention against either King or Duke—nay, their persons are sacred to me, and I detest the machinations of assassins. So, I verily believe, does Monmouth, whom my Lord Shaftesbury tried in vain to make his tool. Monmouth has, to my certain knowledge, given no countenance to schemes for insurrection, which would too surely end in bloodshed. If you must needs accompany me—" Lord Russell said:

"You would have me do so, dear heart; sure you do not wish to leave me behind?"



"Nay, dear one, your presence is ever my solace and support," was the reply. "It is only for your sake I thought it might be well to delay your journey. When I see how matters stand we will fetch the children and settle our household at Southampton House, as when spring advances we are wont to do. I would not that any man should say I feared to present myself at Whitehall. The King and Duke will ere long be at Newmarket, and I would fain pay my court, as the duty of a subject demands, ere they depart. Would to God I could mingle respect with that duty; but these late tyrannies and efforts to take from the people their just rights, this policy of oppression and determination to force a Popish sovereign on the nation when the King dies, shatter respect into fragments."

"The King may outlive his brother, and then a Protestant princess would succeed. Let us hope it may be so; and oh! dearest heart, keep clear of those who would draw you on, and maybe bring about your ruin with their own."

"I am sworn to protest against tyranny, dear wife; nor will I yield one inch of the ground. You would sure not have me sacrifice honest opinion to craven fear."

"No," Lady Russell said, "but a woman's heart is weak when he who reigns there is like to be in danger by rashness, even in a good cause."

"Thy heart, sweet wife, can never be weak. Nay, Rachel, you are the strong staff on which thy husband securely leans."

"Nor, by God's help, shall he ever lean in vain," was Lady Russell's last word, as she went to make



arrangements in the nurseries, and bid her children farewell.

While all these weighty matters were occupying the thoughts of those who are the chief actors in this story of those troublous times, there was one little human heart where a fierce conflict had raged between love and duty.

Such conflicts look very mean when compared with the mighty struggles between kings and people, between loyal and false-hearted men, between might and right. Yet poor little Esther Branstone was nearly worn out with all she had gone through since the dawn of that September day when she had crept silently out of her brother's house to go in search of Louis de Massué. She was filled with a desire to see him once more, hear his voice, tell him of the love which had prompted her to open the letter he had addressed to Faith, confess her sin, and throw herself on his compassion. The wild, undisciplined nature got the mastery. Through the long weeks when Louis lay on the couch in the goldsmith's house, tended by his sisters and his cousin, Esther had sometimes been deputed to amuse the invalid while her cousin and Clémence took an airing in a barge, or attended to the duties which always devolved on Faith in her father's house.

"The child can sing, and Louis is entertained by her," Clémence would say; and indeed Louis was more than entertained, he was often fascinated by Esther's winning ways. None saw the danger but old Abigail, and she had the wisdom to keep her fears to herself, thinking that any opposition would only fan the flame,



and that, after all, Esther was only in years the child that Louis considered her, that he would not lie on that couch for ever, and that he would soon be "out of sight out of mind." But no one had sounded the depths of that child's heart, nor guessed to what lengths her vehement and impulsive nature would lead her.

When she first left her brother's house she had no thought but for the present, and made her way, wrapped in a black cloak and hood, to the bank of the Thames. She reached the stairs, where Louis had been wounded, in the misty dawn when the river was invisible, a dull grey pall covering the water. The palaces and gardens were touched here and there by a ray of pale sunlight, and then the fog closed again its impenetrable veil.

Esther stood by the rail of the stairs unnoticed for some minutes, when a waterman, on his way to a boat dimly discerned at the foot of the stairs, tumbled against her with a bundle he was carrying.

"Have a care, mistress," he said, "or you'll be pitched down into the water—make way, more are following."

Two figures now came in sight, shrouded in long mantles, and evidently in haste to embark. Presently one of the women returned, saying in a rough voice:

"No, I dare not come; I dread the sea. Farewell, mistress."

Another voice was heard in entreaty. "Nay, do not desert me, Amice. I too dread the sea, but I must seek my husband at Rotterdam. I dare not go thither alone."

In a moment Esther sprang forward.



"Madam," she said, "take me. I will serve you. I am bound for the Hague to find—to find one I love. Oh! madam, take me!"

There was a moment's pause, when a loud *ahoy* from the waterman came up from below, with the words:

"The tide will turn ere we make any way; there is no time to spend chattering."

In another moment Esther was in the boat. The waterman pushed off, and they were soon drifting down with the tide to the mouth of the river, where a sloop was to convey them to Rotterdam.

During that long and perilous voyage Esther was brave, and even cheerful. The companion whom she had so unexpectedly found was prostrate with seasickness, and Esther tended her and cheered her with the hope of soon reaching her journey's end.

Mistress Browne was the wife of one of the many exiles who were, day by day, in increasing numbers, taking flight to Holland, to escape the dangers and tumults which were constantly occurring in London. Mistress Browne's lord and master had apparently only consulted his own convenience, and had left his wife to shift for herself, promising to return for her when he had established himself in his trade as tailor at Rotterdam.

"Folk must have clothes to cover them, and he is a wonderful hand at the needle, and can cut a gentleman's cloak to the newest pattern," his wife said to Esther. "But, dear life, he had best have let me come along with him rather than leave me to starve. I just scraped enough money to pay my passage with my

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serving-maid, Amice, and at the last minute she turned back and forsook me, when, as luck would have it, child, you came along. You had best stay with me at Rotterdam; you shall have food and clothes—”

“No, oh, no! I must go to the Hague, madam. I must find those—I came to seek. My uncle,” she said, “is a goldsmith, and went thither a few days ago.”

“Well, well, you look too young to wander about the world in this fashion. How came your uncle to leave you behind? But it’s like men—young and old. They save themselves first, and let the poor women shift as they can.”

It would take too long to tell all the toil and pain Esther endured before she reached her destination. Something in her appealed to the pity of those she met on her journey from Rotterdam. She got lifts in wag-gons, and a night’s lodging in some scrupulously clean Dutch homestead. When at last, footsore and travel-stained, she found herself in the Hague, her heart almost failed her. Long lines of clean streets lay before her, and the great white Palace beyond. If Louis were indeed there how could she find him; and her uncle—how would he receive her? Weary and forlorn she sank down on the steps of a door in one of the principal streets, hungry and exhausted, when she saw a crowd of people running in one direction, and then forming in a line as a procession passed along. Esther was pressed against the door of the house by the crowd, and could barely retain her footing on the topmost step.

The Stadholder William was returning from a short



progress through his dominion, and riding by his side was the Princess Mary, smiling upon the people with graceful inclinations of her head, while her stern husband sat erect on his horse, and scarcely vouchsafed a nod in acknowledgment of the cheers which greeted him. Two or three ladies-in-waiting rode behind the Princess Mary, and were escorted on either side by gentlemen in attendance. Amongst the sombre dress of the Dutch two or three English gallants, in their bright velvet cloaks and flowing curls, were conspicuous. Presently Esther, with eyes dilated and lips which in vain strove to pronounce his name, saw Louis de Massué bending towards a lady who rode nearest him, and smiling in answer to some remark she had made. They rode on, all unheeding of the cry which sounded shrill and piercing, as of a creature in pain, as Esther threw herself from the steps, and made vain efforts to get through the crowd into the middle of the street.

As she gained the open space a horse, galloping after the royal party, knocked her down, and she was carried by the bystanders to the side of the street, where the crowd had now thinned off.

An English voice exclaimed:

“Poor little one!—is she dead?”

Then a tall, stalwart woman took her from the arms of the man who had picked her up, saying, “I will take her home, poor child.” She turned into a narrow by-lane, and, entering a small house, gently and tenderly laid Esther in a neat but humble bed in the front parlour, where she bathed her forehead; and in a few minutes the white lids quivered and Esther came back to life and sorrow.



"Louis! Louis!" she moaned; "oh! Louis, why didn't you hear me?"

"Who is Louis, my child; and from whence do you come?"

But Esther could make no reply; she was in great pain. The horse's hoof had struck her on the shoulder, and her right arm hung helpless by her side.

Presently an old woman came down from a room above.

"Whom have you got here, Sarah?"

"A poor child who has been knocked down by a prancing horse, and the man who rode it galloped off as if he had only run over a dog. But tend her, mother, while I fetch a leech; her arm is broke, and I cannot set a bone."

"'Tis one of the few things you cannot do, Sarah," the old woman said. "Heaven bless you for your care of a sick old woman like me."

For many weeks Esther lay on the humble bed where the kind hands of a good Samaritan had placed her. The winter was long and bitterly cold. All the Hollanders were disporting themselves on the ice, and the good woman, who had befriended the little wanderer, put on her skates every day as she went out on her errands of mercy. With the awakening spring Esther seemed to revive. Her old spirit began to reassert itself, and when her good friend came home one day she found Esther at the door, looking up at the strip of blue sky to be seen above the roofs of the houses, and a light in her dark eyes which told of the renewal of youth and hope.

Sarah Hill was the widow of a Separatist minister



who had fled from persecution in England. She was a lacemaker by trade, and her husband's old mother, nearly blind, supposed that she added to their humble earnings by pricking the elaborate patterns of the lace on paper. She never guessed it was a delusion, and that her daughter-in-law had generally to prick them afresh before taking them to her employers. Lately Esther had begun to help her good friend in this, and also to make progress in the art of lace-making on the pillow, at which Sarah Hill was a very skilful hand. But to-day Esther had sat with folded hands, or had gone to the door to look up at the sky, like a bird preparing for flight.

"You have got roses in your cheeks again, child," Sarah Hill said, putting her arm kindly round Esther. "I thank the Lord that He brought you to me, a childless woman, whose one love is buried in her husband's grave. You are like a daughter to me, Essie?"

"I cannot stay," Esther said, with something of her old vehemence. "I love you. You have taught me to be good and to abhor lies. But I rest not till I find one whom I have wronged, and confess to him my sin."

"Dear child! confess it to our Father who forgives. My husband ever held confession to our fellow-men of no avail. He fled from persecution in England as soon as the tide turned against the ministers of the gospel, when King Charles came to the throne. My husband was betrayed by one who frequented our little conventicle, and the same man, tortured with remorse, arrived here at the Hague to confess his sin and ask forgiveness. My husband bade him confess to God,

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nor make protestations of amendment to a fellow-sinner. I say this to you, dear child, in the name of my husband's Master and Lord."

"Nay, but you do not understand. I must make atonement. I must see him whom I have wronged—then I can die in peace. My uncle I dare not seek, he was ever so stern and hard to me. No one was ever kind but the man whom I have wronged, and," she added, "till you found me I hungered for love and none was given me. They thought me a heartless hussy—that was old Abigail's name for me. Faith looked down on me, Edward was cold and full of reproof. If I sang, they called me a worldling; if I danced, I was a hopeless sinner. But when *he* came he spoke gentle words to me, called me his *petite*, listened to my story, and—while he loved another—I loved *him*! And I parted him from her; not with any hope that I should ever win his heart, but wickedly vowing Faith should never be his wife. Dear heart! my best friend, pity me! and let me go and find him!"

"Not alone. I will go with you on the quest. But whither, my child?"

"To the Palace. He is there, for did I not see him riding past, so handsome and gay, that day when I had rushed to my death had you not saved me? Whatever I do, remember I love you and bless you for your goodness. The poor little orphan girl will never forget the friend who first made her think of God as her father, and the Lord as her Saviour."

Sarah's tears fell fast as she held Esther to her heart.

"It shall be as you wish, and we will find the man



of whom you speak—not to-day nor to-morrow, for I have a large order to finish. Sometimes I wish that my handiwork was used for nobler ends than to deck the gowns of fine ladies. This lace kerchief will most like be folded over a bosom filled with vanity and folly. As I ply the bobbins I often send up a prayer that the wearer of my lace may turn from darkness to light, and serve a better Master than a worldling of the Court.”

That same afternoon a neighbour came in to tell of a grand *fête* in the Orange Hall, when the Stadholder and the Princess Mary would receive certain English gentlemen and gentlewomen who had lately arrived at the Hague. “There will be a banquet first, and fine doings—though it is said that the Prince is disinclined for so brave a show, and that sharp words have passed between the Princess and her lord on the matter.”

The Orange Hall was brilliantly illuminated and filled with many guests on that March evening. The Stadholder and the Princess were seated at the upper end of the room, and William’s face had perhaps never worn a graver and more impenetrable aspect. The news which had lately been brought from England was of profound importance. Lord Shaftesbury had died at the Hague, generously protected by the Dutch Government, but he had left behind him, it was said, in England, his emissaries, who, it was now reported to the Stadholder, were plotting and scheming against the King. Insurrections were spoken of as probable in London, in Bristol, and in Newcastle, and a darker scheme, by which the lives of the King and the Duke of York were threatened, was hinted at.



The Englishmen, who were accustomed to Charles's courteous, and graceful, and often jocose manners, felt rebuffed by the reception they met with from the Prince, on whose face no light of welcome shone, and who certainly had no power of winning hearts by his manner.

The Princess Mary did her utmost to atone for her husband's coldness. She had a smile and pleasant word for those who were at the Orange Hall on this March evening. She possessed what is called a royal memory, and the names of those who were presented to her called forth at once a question as to some member of the family—a well-timed congratulation on the marriage of a daughter, or a word of sympathy on the death of a son.

The court at the Hague, though outwardly decorous, was by no means free from that disregard of pureness of life and morals which reigned openly at Whitehall. Louis de Massué, who had owed his position there to Lord Russell's intervention, had often been surprised at much that he saw and heard behind the scenes, and he knew too well that the Stadholder's wife carried within a sad heart, which had been wounded in its tenderest place by the hand of her apparently cold and unsusceptible husband.

The Princess had found a true friend in Dr. Ken, who, when he was Chaplain at the Hague, had indeed been her spiritual father. By his counsels she had, while remaining firm in her allegiance to the Church of her fathers, been gentle and forbearing when sorely tried by her stern husband's expressions of distaste to the form of prayer and services, to which she had been



accustomed from her childhood. It was Dr. Ken's influence, doubtless, which had restrained her from the levity in which, like many women, she had been inclined to take refuge, to cover the pain which her husband's conduct often gave her. Her respect and love for Dr. Ken never faltered, not even when he had the courage to refuse to take the oath of allegiance to her and Prince William, when the revolution of 1688 had placed them as joint-sovereigns on the throne of England. But Princess Mary had a buoyant spirit, which carried her over many troubles, and on this occasion none who looked at her and watched her graceful manners, and heard her silvery laugh, could have imagined that any cause of disquiet lay hidden within.

The hour for the retirement of the principal people assembled at the Orange Hall had arrived, and Louis de Massué, having discharged his duties as escort to the Princess's suite, was crossing the wide courtyard to his own chambers when a tall, slight figure, clothed in grey homespun, attracted his attention. Esther had grown so visibly in her illness, and her appearance was altogether so widely different from the child in the large room above the goldsmith's shop in London, that it was not surprising that Louis did not recognise her.

Esther's good friend had replaced her travel-stained clothing, as soon as she was able to leave her bed, by a gown of sober grey, over the bodice of which a thick white kerchief was folded. On her head Esther wore the white linen cap familiar in the Netherlands, hiding the thick curls of dark hair which Louis had often stroked as she sat by his side pouring out all her little vexations and troubles into his willing ear.



The March night was chill, and Esther had drawn her cloak closer round her as she stood hour after hour on the steps by the porter's lodge, having pleaded in such a pitiful manner to be suffered to wait there, that the sentinel on duty had found it hard to refuse her.

The sentinel now signalled to Louis, and he went up to the lodge gate.

"Here is some poor woman waiting for you, Master Louis," the man said in Dutch. "I can scarce make out what she says, for her tongue is foreign, and I know scarce three words of English. But I know your name, sir, when I hear it, and that's about all she can say."

"What do you want?" Louis said sternly, as the figure in grey, with a downcast head, came nearer to him. "What do you want? standing about at night like this—begone!"

The moon at its full was high in the heavens, and cast dark shadows across the courtyard; in one of these shadows Esther stood. But as she advanced a step nearer, her face, now raised to Louis, caught the silvery light, which gave it an unearthly look. Louis started back. It was as if he had seen the ghost of the child Esther he remembered.

"I want *you*—I want you!" she said in a low, broken voice. "I have come to tell you something, but not here—not here! No one must hear it but you; then I can die, when you know all!"

"Poor child! are you distraught?" Louis said. "What can this mean?"

And indeed he could almost question whether the figure in grey, with the snowy white cap on her head,



and the pale wan face, which the silver moonbeams were illuminating, were anything but a vision from another world.

"What can this mean?" he repeated.

"Ah! you are angry with me already, and I love you so well—so well—"

"Esther!" Louis said sternly, as she flung herself on her knees at his feet, "this is no place for a scene!" for he heard footsteps approaching, and two men crossed the courtyard. "Rise at once! nor bring disgrace on yourself and on me!"

As the two men came near him Louis heard a low laugh, and the words, in Dutch:

"De Massué! are you in trouble with a lady-love—it seems like it!"

"Yes," said the other, "you are not so wondrous moral as you would have us believe."

Louis bit his lip and chafed under the imputation, but he made no rejoinder, and with another low guttural laugh the men passed on.

"Rise instantly, child, and I will take you to a place of safety—you cannot remain here."

Then Louis raised the prostrate form, and, supporting Esther with his arm, he bade the sentinel let him pass, and silently led his unexpected visitor away.

She scarcely heeded where he was going, leaning heavily on his arm, her head bent, her breast heaving with sobs. On through the quiet white streets Louis strode, for it was late and but few people were abroad. After half-an-hour's swift walking he turned into a lane leading from the principal thoroughfare, and spoke for the first time.



"I am taking you to the care of your uncle, Ethelbert Jenkyns. There I will leave you, and return on the morrow to hear what you have to say."

"Not to him—not to him!" she murmured brokenly. "Take me to Sarah Hill—she will not spurn me—I dare not, oh! I dare not see my uncle!"

Louis took no notice of this appeal, but gave a loud sharp knock at the goldsmith's door. After it had been twice repeated a head was thrust out from an upper window, and a voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"It is I—Louis de Massué—I demand admittance for your niece, Esther Branstone!"

"Am I dreaming?" the goldsmith asked. "Is this a vision of the night like Jacob's of old?"

"Nay, Master Jenkyns, this is no vision, though I have been asking myself the same query. Admit us, I pray you, without delay."

After some minutes heavy bolts and bars were drawn back and the door opened. A dim lamp was in Master Jenkyns's hand, and throwing the light on Esther's face, he said:

"Nay, but this is not my niece—Edward's sister!"

"Yes, yes, it is. Oh! uncle, good uncle, be not hard on me—like him—for whose sake I came hither!"

The misery of her voice moved Ethelbert Jenkyns to pity. He took one of her cold hands in his, and said:

"Come in, poor misguided child, come in; and you, sir, give an account of this matter, for it seems you have been the cause of this poor child's distress."

"You misjudge me, sir, as before. I have naught



to do with this unhappy maiden's condition. I do not forget that you are my mother's brother, or I might resent your imputation more fiercely—not more fiercely than you deserve.”

They were now in a small parlour at the back of the shop, and Esther sank down trembling and shuddering on a wooden settle with a high carved back, which flanked one side of the wide hearth, where blue and white glazed tiles shimmered in the light of Master Jenkyns's lamp—a bright spot in the gloom.

“Have you no womankind in the house who can tend this poor child?” Louis asked.

“I have the services of the wife of one of my craftsmen, but she is a-bed and would not care to be awakened rudely from her slumber. An exile in a strange land, good nephew, has not menials at his beck and call. But the Lord has prospered me, and my nephew Edward has not failed in his promise, sending out to me my share of the profits of the business in St. Paul's Churchyard. My daughter is by now his wife, repenting her of her resistance to a father's will.”

“Is that true?” Louis asked in a cold, hard voice; “is that true?”

“I would fain hope so,” was the reply. “A dutiful letter from Faith, full of love and sorrow for her past conduct, serves to assure me that ere now she is established in her old home, the wife of a God-fearing man.”

“And I, sir,” Louis said, “do not for an instant believe your daughter is Edward Branstone's wife. It may be, alas! true that she will not be mine, but Faith



is not the woman to give her hand to any man when her heart belongs to another."

"It does belong to you," Esther cried. "Oh! for pity's sake, Uncle Ethelbert, let me be alone with this gentleman. I have that to tell him which he does not know—which none know but me and God. Only his ears must hear it—Louis! Louis, hear me. It concerns one whom you love—Faith—Faith Jenkyns!"

Then Louis turned to Master Jenkyns and said:

"Leave us together; it would seem that this poor child is scarce in her senses, but if the matter of which she speaks concerns Faith I must hear it."

Master Jenkyns set the lamp on the wooden shelf above the fireplace, and saying:

"I will summon the woman to get up and tend this unhappy child, and trusting to your honour that my suspicions are groundless, I will leave you together."

A sudden change seemed to come over Esther when at last she was alone, face to face, with Louis, with the confession on her lips. She did not tremble now, or make passionate appeals for forgiveness, but, rising from the settle where she had sunk when Louis had brought her in, she told her sad story from first to last. Her small white hands were clasped together, her head raised, her large dark eyes fixed on Louis's face as upon a judge by whom a sentence of death might be pronounced. In the dim light of that little parlour Esther's cap and kerchief stood out in the darkness, white as snow; yet scarcely whiter than her face on which was written the intensity of her suppressed feeling.

Louis listened without making any comment, his



arms folded, his eyes full of latent fire, his lips closely shut.

"You have worked much mischief," he said at last; "and for what end? Why did you break the seal of that letter and lie to the messenger?"

The words came out clear and distinct.

"Because—I loved you!"

Louis turned his head away, and again there was a pause.

"Loved me!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I want your love! I care not if I never see your face again!"

"I could not help it," the poor child said. "How could I help it? You were so good to me—you made me long to be like Faith, gentle and tender. Oh! forgive me for my love's sake!"

"Ask forgiveness of God," Louis said; "you have sore need of it!"

"Ah, Louis!—Louis!—" she cried, "forgive me!" but she stretched out her arms to empty space, for Louis was gone.

A few moments later Master Jenkyns, coming down with his Dutch serving-woman, who was muttering and grumbling at being roused from her sleep, found Esther lying on the floor of the parlour with no sign of life.

Her good friend Sarah Hill had become very uneasy as the hours went on and Esther did not return. Sarah remembered what she had said of her desire to find one to whom she wanted to make a confession, and that he was at the palace with the grand people whom she had seen in the procession, on the day when she had taken her to her home and cared for her as if she had been her own child. This clue led her to



make inquiries at the gate of the palace, and the porter and sentinel on duty gave her the information that a woman in grey had stood like a statue outside the gates on the previous evening, waiting for hours for a young gallant who did not seem over-pleased to see her when he did come! He took her away with him, but where was not known.

Sarah was beginning to give up all hope of reclaiming the poor wanderer, when Louis himself came through the gates, and one of the men called to her:

"Yonder is the young gallant the woman waited for!"

Sarah Hill hastened to overtake him, and speaking in good English, said:

"Your pardon, sir; do you know aught of one Esther Branstone? I am seeking her with a heavy heart."

Louis drew back with a haughty inclination of his head, and replied:

"The woman of whom you speak is at the house of her uncle, a goldsmith at the further end of the town in a side street, under the care she needs."

He was passing on when Sarah exclaimed:

"I love that child as my own—she is scarce a woman! I pray you, sir, tell me all you know of her. If she has sinned she has suffered—be pitiful to her!"

"I will leave her, my good woman, to tell you all she knows of me," was the answer; "if you are her friend, deal honestly with her. Stay!" he said, as Sarah Hill was passing on; "do you need further directions as to Master Jenkyns's house, or," he added, "money to carry out what seem your benevolent intentions towards that unhappy child?"



"I need no money," Sarah said, "but I will ask you, sir, to guide me in the direction, at least, of Master Jenkyns's house, for I know not the name at the Hague, or where he lives."

Louis now beckoned to his servant, who was holding his horse for him to mount.

"Guide this good woman," he said in Dutch, "to the shop of Jenkyns the goldsmith, of whom Lady Beckford ordered the necklet last week."

Then with a courteous bow, but no other remark, Louis mounted his horse and rode away.

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## CHAPTER XII.

## RIPENING PLOTS.

JUNE 1683. Richard Cheeke's chambers were at the top of one of the houses in Middle Temple Lane. Here he was seated before a table covered with papers, parchments, and heavy folios, one June afternoon when the summer sun was beating on the roof, and the small window admitted but little air. Richard had a quill behind his ear, and was leaning back in his chair, with the heavy curls of his chestnut hair pushed back from his forehead, and his whole attitude that of a man who was tired of work and would willingly be free, as the city sparrows chirping on the sill of the lattice, to fly over the opposite houses and escape from the confinement of that small chamber. A prolonged yawn was followed by a sigh as he took from a case of letters by his side one that had evidently more interest for him than the law papers and extracts from Lord Bacon's works, which he had been making from the huge volume before him.

Richard Cheeke pressed the letter to his lips, and read it for the third time that day.

"Ah!" he said aloud, "it is worth a man's labour at a thousand dry law books to have a sweet reminder like this, that he holds the heart of a woman like Clémence. But the news I must give in reply is grave,



though doubtless it has reached Stratton ere now, and it will cause trouble there, methinks!"

Richard's soliloquy was interrupted by a sharp rap at the door.

"Come in," he said. "Who's there?" And the door immediately opened to admit Louis de Massué.

Richard sprang up and the two men grasped each other's hands with a warmth of greeting which showed the visitor was welcome.

"How long have you been in England?" Richard asked.

"In London only a few hours. I am here to assure myself of the aspect of affairs in this country. Many rumours reach the Hague, contradicting each other. We scarce know what to believe, or whose word to trust."

"If that is true at the Hague, Louis, it is more true in this country. The air is full of plots and counter-plots, and traitors and liars flourish. Doubtless you are prepared for this—it is no new thing."

"This plot against the life of the King—to murder him at a place near Newmarket?"

"Hush, my good Louis! Speak low; although I am in the roof, with no companions but the sparrows, I swear I dread the very walls having ears, and West's chambers are not far off, where all manner of wickedness is hatched."

As Richard Cheeke spoke he drew a heavy curtain over the door opening on the stairs, and peered into his small bed-chamber beyond, closing the door and, in spite of the heat, the window also, which sent the sparrows off in a twittering company and a pigeon or



two to strut with offended dignity on the roofs opposite.

"A pretty pass we are come to," Richard said, "when two honest men are afraid to speak of any matter lest birds of the air should carry the words to their destruction. Yes," he went on, "two villains, not so far from the place where we stand, have concocted a story which goes to show that a rising is designed in November, at an hour when devout folk will be in church; and that two great personages were to have been 'lopped' at a house near Newmarket, coming or going; the scheme falling through, on account of the fire which drove the great folk to leave Newmarket a week sooner than was expected."

"Is it true that it is desired to drag in a noble lord to his destruction—him with whom, on his lady's side, I claim kinship?"

Richard nodded.

"If this is done," he said, "it will lie at the door of a greater villain than those two of whom I spoke—Rumsey and West—one who, though he wears a coronet, would turn informer to save his own pate, which I would fain see cracked for his pains."

"You speak somewhat in riddles, good Richard, but I am bound for Stratton where I may, I trust, find those I love in good health."

"Of that I can assure you," Richard said. "This letter came, by special messenger, enclosed in despatches from Stratton to Southampton House this morning. Those dear to you and to me are in good case, but 'the little master' is very sick, and my Lady has sent for my Lord Russell, begging him to bring with him



the King's physician. And now, of more private matters. How fares it with you and the goldsmith's sweet daughter?"

"I go to discover precisely how I stand with regard to her," Louis said. "Her father, now established at the Hague, would have me believe she is yielding—nay, has yielded—to his wishes, and will marry with Edward Branstone."

"Never!" Richard said. "Keep an easy mind on this matter, though, as I told you in a letter to which you never replied, your last entreaty never reached her. Why it never reached her remains a mystery still."

"It is no mystery to me," Louis said, "for I know now who stopped that letter on its way. I should have started sooner to see Faith, but I am scarce my own master, and I was detained at the Hague in attendance on their Highnesses, from one of whom, at any rate, I receive much kindness."

"I am all curiosity to hear about that letter. Was it lost, stolen, or did it go astray?"

"It is a sad story," Louis said, with evident emotion. "I would fain be spared from entering further into it now. I will tell it in full to Faith herself, and seek her counsel thereon, as to whether I shall share my information about that letter with anyone but herself. And how does your love for my sister prosper, good Richard?"

"Exceeding well, as this precious letter assures me. I hope to be called to the Bar in the autumn of this year, and then I may get a place as helper to a law officer, which will enable me to take home my bride. You may well wish me joy, Louis, and note well my

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gratitude to you, for had I never met you I should never have known her who has, by her love, won me to a better life. God helping me, I will prove worthy of her trust in me."

"I must hasten to Southampton House to discover whether my Lord has already started for Stratton. If not, I may be permitted to travel with him and discuss certain matters by the way. So adieu, for a short space. On my return from Stratton I will see you again. *Au revoir!*"

Lord Russell had not started for Stratton when Louis arrived, but his coach was ready, and he invited Louis to take a place in it, while his servants followed on horseback with the baggage. Lord Russell did not speak much during the journey, though he listened to what Louis had to say of the Hague, and the attitude which the Stadholder and Princess Mary held towards him.

"They are both, my Lord, your very fast friends," Louis said, "and your good commendation of me to their Highnesses has doubtless brought about their kindness to me. It is ever difficult to discover what is the real opinion of the Stadholder on any public question, he is so wrapt about by an impenetrable reserve, but the Princess never fails to speak of you and your lady with warm affection and approval."

"Ah," Lord Russel said, with a sad smile, "put not your trust in princes, Louis, nor in any child of man. At this moment, as we roll over the familiar road, one thought is uppermost—my little son's condition. If it please God to take him from us, all cabals, and intrigues, and condemnation, or favour of princes, would



be as dust in the balance. Dr. King, the King's physician, is following us, and he may prescribe for the boy — 'the little master' — and set his mother's heart at rest about him. God grant it."

When they reached Stratton, where Lord Russell was anxiously expected, many of the household were assembled in the hall. Lord Russell sprang out, and making his way through the servants and attendants, he scanned their faces as he passed, but asked no questions. Evidently there was no good news, for every countenance was grave and anxious. No little maidens came skipping down the wide stairs to meet their father, holding to their mother's gown. Silence reigned, and Louis, asking the question that the father of the boy had not dared to put, received for answer:

"The boy is fevered and light-headed. Mistress Jenkyns and Mistress Clarice are with my Lady, who is calm, though distraught with grief, neither sleeping nor eating since the child was stricken."

"Could I see Mistress Jenkyns or—"

The question had scarcely left his lips when Faith herself appeared at the foot of the stairs, and turning towards a door close by, she said:

"I can speak with you here, Louis."

The sound of his name from her lips was, after so many months, like music in his ears. He followed her into the room and, with the gesture of a tired child, as he held out his arms to her, she laid her head upon his breast with a deep, long sigh of content.

"Are you indeed glad to come to me, my sweetheart—my angel, Faith?"

"Ah, yes, so glad."



And then, for a few moments, the bliss of union, and the clearing away of all clouds of distrust and misunderstanding, left the two long-separated hearts in the sunshine of new-found happiness.

Presently Faith said:

"There is sorrow in this house. We must not forget it; and I must now return to the nursery where the boy lies sick—sick unto death, the country apothecary says—but I have hope. His mother—who can tell what she is in time of trouble, who know her only in the bright days of joy? She is quiet and calm, nay, even cheerful—striving to dispel the fears of the two little sisters, and meeting my Lord with the cheery words: '“Little Master” is no worse, dear heart! Will Dr. King soon be here?’ Ah! no worse, it may be, but no better," Faith said, "and my heart is sore for those to whom he is as the apple of their eye."

Faith made no reference to the lost letter. What did it matter now that Louis was with her again? and he, shrinking from repeating the sad tale of Esther's deliberate falsehood, did not begin the subject.

"I must away to my mother now," Louis said at last. "How fares it with her and my sisters?"

"Clarice is like a good spirit here," Faith said. "But Clémence has drooped much during the cold spring. She has had a weariful time with the poor aunt, who, believing herself ailing, has no thought for the sickness of others. Clémence is saint-like, or she could never have endured what has been laid upon her. I will return to the chamber above," Faith continued, "and send Clarice to give you a welcome."

"First," Louis said, detaining her, "give me a pro-



mise—it has been a long, long waiting; will you return with me to the Hague as my wife? Your father is established there. He will forget everything in the joy of seeing you. Say, Faith, will you grant this request?"

And Faith, raising her face to his, said firmly: "I will!" and their betrothal was sealed by a kiss.

Clarice came down soon after Faith had left the room, her delight at seeing her brother tempered by her concern for the sorrow in the house.

"But though all meals and all order seem forgotten in distress about 'the little master,'" she said, in her practical, energetic manner, "you must not starve after your journey. They will serve supper in the dining-hall ere long, for there are many as hungry as you must be, Louis. After the meal I will show you the path over the park to the cottage, where our mother and Clémence have passed many weary days. *Pauvre petite maman!*" Clarice said, "she pines for you—and now you are here she will pine for something she cannot have—*pauvre petite maman!*"

When at last Louis reached the cottage, in the gloaming of the summer evening, he was greeted by old Abigail, who had watched him and Clarice crossing the park.

"Well-a-day, Master Louis! You have been slow in coming. You are wanted here, I warrant, for, if Madame thinks herself sick, there is one who *is* sick, and no mistake about it. When folk lose flesh till they are scarce more than a shadow it's time to be scared, and I *am* scared, I can tell you. You can judge for yourself," and throwing open the door of the little parlour, Abigail said: "The young master, Mistress Clémence."



Clémence started up from a couch where she had been lying in a light doze.

"Oh, Louis! Louis!" she cried, and threw herself into his arms.

"My child!" Louis said, "what ails you? You are as white as a ghost—you are—"

"Never mind what I am," Clémence said. "Tell me of yourself—and where is Clarice? Has she gone to call *petite maman*, who is in the garden, at the back of our cottage, picking flowers? I should have bid her come in sooner, but somehow I fell asleep; and when you came in, Louis, I thought it was my father, of whom I had been dreaming. I saw him so plain, and was talking to him in French—the dear French tongue no one cares to speak now."

Madame de Massué was herself, and only herself! She looked very young for her years, and was daintily dressed, and her face shone with maternal pride as she looked up at her handsome son, exclaiming:

"Ah, my dear Louis, there cannot be a gallant to match you at the Hague! How fine, how tall, and what beauteous lace on your sleeves and neck! It has been so hard to live without you—so hard—and I am never well, and old Abigail has a rough tongue; and as to Clarice she is taken up by the grand folk at Stratton, and I have had such a weary, weary winter, and often short as to money, for I have had to get physic from the doctor."

Louis had led his mother to the couch whence Clémence had risen, and seating himself by her, he said:

"You look as if you needed no physic, mother mine—but what has happened to Clémence?"



"Happened? Oh, she has not been sick, unless she is love-sick. I would fain have her give up Dick Cheeke. She might gain a far better suitor, for all those fine folk who come to the great house admire both your sisters. As to Clarice, she will repent when too late that she looks coldly on many a gallant, but Clarice is wrapped up in her lady, as she calls her, and thinks of naught beside and the little misses, who are full of their own importance and can be pert when they choose. Faith Jenkyns is lucky indeed to get placed in that noble family, but she is different from my daughters and your sisters, who come of the same noble house as my Lady herself, though she would fain forget it at times, forsooth!"

Clémence had gone into the little pleasaunce before the cottage with Clarice, and Louis said:

"Dr. King is summoned to Lord Russell's son. I shall bring him here, if possible, and beg him to give his opinion about Clémence. Surely you see how much changed she is, mother?"

"She has lost colour," Madame de Massué said, "but she never was ruddy. She is like your poor father, who was ever pale and spare. He ate too little food, and as to wine, he seldom touched it. Clémence takes after him."

Louis shook his head.

"When was Richard Cheeke here last?" he asked.

"I forget. I do not greatly covet his visits. He has been at the great house twice or thrice this year; not for some time now—not since March—when Clémence and I were both sick with a rheum, as you were told, or I mistake not."



A short cough heard from the pleasaunce outside made Louis rise and go to the lattice.

"Do not stand there, Clémence," he said. "The dew is falling. Come into the house."

Clémence turned towards her brother, and said:

"I wanted to hear all Clarice could tell of the dear 'little master.'"

"And I must now return to the house," Clarice said. "Are you coming with me, Louis? Can you find your way alone?"

"Oh! stay yet a little longer, my dear son," Madame de Massué said plaintively. "I would fain hear of all you have seen and done at the Hague, and of the fair ladies who have shown you favour. Do not leave me yet, Louis."

Louis consented to remain, and Clarice was seen, flitting across the park, from the window, while Clémence came into the house, and Louis, putting his arm tenderly round her, said:

"Dear *petite sœur*, I must take you under my care now, and try to win back roses to these pale cheeks. Have you let Richard Cheeke know you are ailing?"

"No, no," Clémence said. "I am not very ailing—" then, in a low voice, "*petite maman* does not like to hear I am sick. Do not trouble her about it, but tell us your news."

"Well," he said, "my great and cheerful news is that I am betrothed to my sweet cousin, Faith Jenkyns, and she will return to the Hague with me as my wife."

"What!" exclaimed his mother. "You will not throw away all your chances of a grand marriage by wedding that girl? Oh!" Madame de Massué ex-



claimed, "it is too unkind to blight your poor mother's hopes. Faith Jenkyns is no meet wife for you, Louis. You might pick and choose amongst the highest in this country or—"

"Nay, dear mother," Louis said, "I am only following my father's example. Did he not choose you for the love he bore you, and for that love cast to the winds the thought of any other wife, gentle or simple? I—"

"I thought you had cast her aside," Madame de Massué said. "I thought you had no communication with her. I hoped it was but a passing fancy."

"Instead, mother mine, it is the sole love of my life. Naught could change it; and as to the time of separation, and what caused it, I will tell you the cause some day, but not now. If there was a cloud between my love and me, it is dispelled, and I bask in the sunshine of a mutual confidence and love."

"Surely, dear mother," Clémence said, "we could never desire a sweeter wife for our Louis than Faith Jenkyns?"

"That is all very well," Madame de Massué replied irritably. "I set my heart on my children making good marriages, and I am thwarted and disappointed—it is too bad. Dutiful children should consider their mothers in these matters, especially when, like me, the poor mother is a widow and forlorn, and with no friends, and—" Madame de Massué broke down into tears and sobbed hysterically.

The sound brought Abigail into the parlour with a sharp remonstrance.

"Hoity-toity! Here's a pretty way to show your



love, Madame, for your fine son. Come, drink his health and Mistress Clémence's in a cup of spiced wine, and have done with crying. There's naught which wrinkles up the face so much as crying. Why, a long crying fit adds a year to any woman's face."

This was a clever thrust of Abigail's. Madame de Massué wiped away her tears, and took a long draught from the cup of wine which Abigail brought to her.

All that night Lord and Lady Russell kept watch together by the bed of the "little master." Dr. King arrived in the dawn of the summer morning, and his opinion was reassuring. He said the treatment adopted by the country practitioner had been, in the main, wise, and he gave every hope that the fever which seemed to be consuming the strength of the child, would yield to his remedies. These were sufficiently stringent, and it is a wonder that little Wriothsesley survived them. Potions and pills were administered by the great physician's orders, and a little more blood taken from the child's arm. At the close of the second day the fever left him, but, as might be expected, so weak that he was scarcely able to lift his head from the pillow; yet he was soon, as Dr. King had predicted, on the way to recovery.

While the anxiety about their boy lay like a heavy weight on the hearts of both parents, the vexations and dangers gathering like a storm-cloud in their horizon were forgotten, or, if remembered, seemed almost trivial when compared with the blow which had threatened to fall, and take from them their only son. When at last his recovery was assured, Lord Russell and his wife



went out on the terrace at Stratton to breathe the sweet air of an early summer morning, and for the first time recurred to the condition of affairs in London, which were daily growing worse.

"I shall move the family to Southampton House as soon as 'little master' can bear the journey," Lord Russell was saying. "He will be then within reach of Dr. King's advice, if he needs it. It is well for me to be on the spot, for my absence from the Court may be misconceived, and motives of fear attributed as its cause. Fear! I have no fear," Lord Russell said: "An honest man cannot be a craven. I would I could stand face to face with those vile informers."

Lady Russell detained her husband, as he was turning to re-enter the house, by a gentle pressure of his arm.

"Dear heart," she said, "forgive me if I entreat you once more to be cautious. You say truly, an honest man has naught to fear; but it is also true he is no match for the liars and deceivers who would compass his ruin. This morning, when I saw our boy lying in a quiet sleep, and he opened his eyes on me and smiled, I knelt and gave thanks to God for His great mercy, and asked for wisdom to order our steps aright in what lies before us. Echo that prayer, dearest heart, and entreat for a right and calm judgment in all things."

"For a right judgment, yes, Rachel, but for strength also never to yield one inch of the ground where, for the sake of liberty in religion and politics, I have taken my stand."

Then Lord Russell, gently disengaging himself from the clasp of his wife's hands, turned hastily towards the



house, where Louis de Massué was awaiting him. Lady Russell went to the stone balustrade which skirted the terrace, and leaning on it, looked out on the fair scene stretched out before her with wistful eyes. The hay-makers were tossing an abundant crop in the meadows, the air sweet with the fragrance of the newly-mown grass. Now and again the song of the girls, busy with their healthful toil, reached her ears. The cuckoo, not yet silent, called from the copse, and the young rooks, in the topmost branches of the distant trees, made their monotonous caw as they were returning with food for their young fledglings, still in the roughly-constructed nests.

Thoughts of other days passed through Lady Russell's mind—of her youth and childhood spent in this beautiful home. But all memories were dim, when compared with the memory of that blissful day when she first returned to Stratton as Lord Russell's bride. Could any wife, she thought, look back on a happier record of domestic joys, unbroken confidence, and tender love? Her heart was full of thankfulness for the past that morning, and for the recovery of her boy in the present; and yet there was an undertone of sadness which she could not silence, the shadow of a coming cloud which might darken her sky, an undefined dread of something which might be drawing near with stealthy, yet certain tread, a coming sorrow which might take shape before many days had passed.

Lady Russell's musing was interrupted by a gentle voice near her.

"Dear madam," Faith Jenkyns said, "I have come to seek your counsel."



"And you shall have it, dear Faith," Lady Russell said, gladly. "Take a turn with me on the terrace ere I go back to my sick child. The air with its sweet scent has been like balm to me after my anxious watching. For surely, dear Faith, joy has come in the morning, though heaviness endured for three long, dark nights."

"Madam," Faith said, "Louis de Massué prays me to marry him at once, that we may never again be separated. I am in a strait what to say. I could not leave you while you needed my poor services, and it is plain to me that Clarice must go to the help of Clémence, who is indeed, I fear, very sick. Dr. King considers that she is in a decline, and that no physic will avail. The care of my poor aunt has been too heavy for her, unassisted; sweet, and uncomplaining as she is. Till Louis came, Clarice and I were blind to her real condition. But we feel that we cannot both leave our dear mistress; for though so many are at hand to serve her, none can love her better."

"Nor serve her more faithfully," Lady Russell said. "Hearken, Faith. If my lord approves, you shall be Louis's wife, and accompany us to Southampton House, whither we are to move with all speed as soon as 'little master' is pronounced well enough. Has Louis laid his plan before my lord as to your marriage?"

"He has gone to do so now, madam. If he approves," Faith said simply, "I am ready. My father has left me, and Louis says he cannot justly forbid my marriage now. Oh! madam, when I return, as Louis's happy wife, to the Hague, surely he will forgive me?"

"Indeed he will, or I misjudge good Master Jenkyns,"



Lady Russell said. "Dear child!" she added tenderly, "I will hope to see you my kinsman's bride ere many days are passed, and may you know the bliss of married life that God has granted me. I will see Clarice, and if it be possible I will make her return to her mother as pleasant as I can. The children will pine for her, and she has, by her cheerfulness, beguiled for me many an anxious hour. Yet duty to her mother is her first duty, and far be it from me to take a child from a parent, or one sister from another, who needs her help and support. With my lord's sanction, preparations shall at once be made for your marriage in our private chapel, and I will see that the fair bride has garments befitting her marriage with a son of the old house of Ruvigny."

These preparations of which Lady Russell spoke were hurriedly made. Dr. Tillotson arrived at Stratton, and he and Lord Russell were in consultation for many hours on the following day. The good Dean had come to communicate tidings which were of the gravest possible nature, and which he hoped would have the effect of delaying the removal of the Stratton household to Southampton House. But his hopes were not realised. Lord Russell, now that his boy was recovering, seemed to have become even more resolute not to absent himself from London, and the Dean's advice, not to be hasty in going there, was of no avail.

Lady Russell perhaps scarcely realised the danger in which her husband stood; admiration for his unflinching courage and honesty of purpose seemed to fill her heart, and make her almost insensible to the fears others entertained for his safety.



"If he is innocent," she urged on the Dean, "what has he to fear? Naught can be proved against him, even if he is named as being a participator in this plot of which you speak."

"Dear Lady," the Dean said, "the annals of our history do not show, alas! that the innocent always escape; nay, God has permitted the contrary many a time. Persuade my Lord not to go to London till he receives fuller information."

Lady Russell smiled, and said:

"We have a dear and faithful friend in you, Doctor, and one from whom no storms of adversity can ever part us. Now I have to beg you, as a favour, to unite my trusty and well-loved Faith Jenkyns in marriage with my young kinsman, Louis de Massué, early on the morrow. We propose that they shall proceed at once to Southampton House, taking some of the household in their train, and my lord will follow with you in your coach; while I will tarry for a few days till our 'little master' is quite recovered from his sickness."

The summer sun was shining through the east window of the chapel at Stratton the next morning when Faith Jenkyns was married by Dr. Tillotson to Louis de Massué. The household were present, and the little ladies, Rachel and Catherine, stood behind the bride with Clarice. Madame de Massué was standing near her son, leaning for support on Clémence, who looked but ill-calculated to bear her mother's weight on her arm, slight though it was.

Poor Madame de Massué had tried to preserve a dignified demeanour towards Faith when Louis had brought her to the cottage in the park, on the previous



evening, to receive her blessing. But to-day she quite broke down, and at the close of the ceremony, as soon as the Dean had pronounced the benediction, she burst into weeping, kissing Faith, and gasping out between her sobs:

"My son loves you—it is enough. God bless you!" And while the bride strove to maintain her calmness, Madame de Massué, regardless of time and place, threw herself upon Louis and cried, "Oh, my son, my son! Do not forsake me for her—love me a little still."

"Peace, mother," Clarice said sharply, provoked that this scene should be witnessed by Lord and Lady Russell, and still more provoked that the household should comment on it to each other, and that the children, demure and quiet as they were accustomed to be in church or chapel, should gaze upon Madame de Massué with wide open eyes, full of surprise and disapproval. Even Dr. Tillotson looked grave and stern as she passed out, attended by his gentleman, who bore before him an old ecclesiastical staff, which had been found with other relics at Stratton, and was followed by the whole party to the large hall, where a bountiful repast was spread.

Lord Russell presided, with Lady Russell on one side of him and the Dean on the other. A massive gold grace cup was passed round at Lord Russell's bidding, that all guests might, as he said, drink the health of Louis de Massué and his fair lady, Mistress Faith de Massué.

The company had just risen from the board when



there were sounds of arrival without, and voices inquiring for Lord Russell.

"Ah!" Lord Russell said, "what has brought you here, too late for the wedding, Richard Cheeke?" as Richard, with but little ceremony, came hastily into the hall.

"My Lord, may I have an audience with you and the Dean? I bring news—I would to God I could say it was good news. There are also messengers, my lord, arrived from Bedford House bearing a despatch from the Earl."

"Well," Lord Russell said, "let them await my pleasure. I will hear your news first, Richard; but first drink the bride's health, and greet your lady love."

None would have guessed from Lord Russell's manner that he was prepared to hear the tidings which Richard had brought, and of which the Dean of Canterbury had been the forerunner on the previous day. Richard seized the cup and said, in a voice which quivered with feeling:

"Here's to the health and happiness of my good friend, Louis de Massué, and his bride—and good people, let us add to the safety and prosperity of the head of this noble house, and his gracious lady."

"Thanks, good Richard, for coupling our names with that of our young kinsman and his fair bride; and now let us hear in private what you have to tell."

"First, my lord, pardon me," and Richard went up to the place where Clémence stood, leaning on the back of her mother's chair, pale and trembling. "Sweetheart,



what ails you? Clémence, have you no word of greeting for me?"

Clarice here interrupted:

"Clémence is not able to bear surprises, even pleasant ones. She will be herself ere long. Meantime, go to those who await you."

Richard gazed down at Clémence with an anxious, troubled look on his face.

"She is ill, and you have hidden it from me—you have done me a great wrong."

"Nay, Richard," Clémence faltered, "it is nothing. Thy coming has made my silly heart beat too fast, that is all. No one has done thee wrong. I shall be well anon, when you return to me."

Richard bent and kissed the little white hand he had taken in his, and then turned away to have the audience with Lord Russell, for which he had ridden so many miles in hot haste.

He found Lord Russell and the Dean alone together. Lady Russell had gone to her sick child, but returned just as Richard Cheeke was beginning his statement.

"Dear heart," Lord Russell said, rising and giving her a chair next him, and taking possession of one of her hands, "how fares our boy?"

"So well," was the reply, "he has asked for his hobby-horse, and would fain mount it, but waits at my bidding till he is stronger. What is Richard's news?"

Richard hesitated, but Lord Russell said:

"Say on, good Richard. I have no secrets from my wife, nor from my best friend."



"My lord," Richard said, "it is only right you should know in detail what transpired on the eighteenth day of this month. The King was sent for to hear the full particulars of this pretended discovery. A wretch, by name Keeling, vows that a plot had been formed in the spring of this year, for enlisting forty men to intercept the King and Duke of York, on their return from Newmarket, at a farmhouse belonging to one Rumbold, a maltster. The house is called Rye, and there the evil design was laid. The fire at Newmarket, which brought the King and Duke to London earlier by a week, frustrated the infamous plot. A man named Goodenough is spoken of, as saying that an insurrection was then also planned—four thousand men, and twenty thousand pounds being raised by the Duke of Monmouth and—" Richard said slowly and with emphasis, "*other great men.*"

"What other great men?" Lord Russell asked.

Richard paused, and then said:

"You are one of those men who are named, my lord, and Lord Essex is another."

"And what do they bring against me? Come, Richard, I am not afraid to hear—be not you afraid to tell."

"That you promised your support to these evil practices, and were ready, with the Duke of Monmouth, to connive at killing the King and the Duke, his brother."

For a moment, Lord Russell's eyes blazed with indignation.

"By Heaven!" he said, "what villainy shall I hear



next? But," he added, resuming his composed quiet manner, "have you more to tell, Richard?"

"That the miscreants who set afloat this dreadful rumour have split up and have separated, each man shifting for himself."

"Poor wretches," Lord Russell said. "Well, I shall be in London in a few hours' time, and shall doubtless hear more."

"My lord," Richard said, "remain here till things have further developed."

"And for what end, Richard?"

"If these false swearers are believed, you could then escape."

"And so give colour to the report of those who dare to say I am guilty? No, Richard, never. I will stand or fall as God wills, but I will by His help never act the craven."

The Dean saw that further persuasion was useless, and Lady Russell said:

"My lord's resolution is taken, Richard, and we shall not be able to move it. What he says is true—his presence in London, now these evil reports are flying, will stand him in better stead than his absence."

"And now for my father's messengers," said Lord Russell. "I must see them and hear what I would dare to say is the twice or thrice-told tale—and as I know my good father's mind, I scarce need to hear it from others." Then turning to Lady Russell, he said: "Sweetheart, will you not go to see the departure of the bride and bridegroom with Richard, and wish them God speed."



Lady Russell saw that her husband dreaded her pleading to alter his determination, which indeed was unalterable, and rising with a smile, she said:

"Come, Richard, let us leave the Dean and my lord together to hear, it may be as he says, a twice-told tale from the Earl's messengers."

And then Lady Russell left the library, Richard Cheeke following her.

The preparations for departure had been made, but Lady Russell called the bride to her for a last word in her private room near her children's nursery.

"Dear Faith," Lady Russell said, "I pray God a happy life may lie before you and my kinsman. But take note of all you hear and see, and all that Louis learns of the true state of affairs, and let me have it by special messenger, if my coming to London be yet delayed for a few days. You are a clever scribe, and therefore I depute you to jot down what occurs, that I may have any information that may be important. I can trust you to be discreet and loyal, dear Faith."

"You may indeed trust me and Louis also. Oh! dear madam, what a strange life this is, of joys and griefs mingled. To be Louis's wife is a joy, but I have sorrowful thoughts of my poor father, an exile, of Clémence fading away, and for you, dear lady, I have anxious fears for the future."

"Dismiss all such for this your bridal day, dear child," Lady Russell said, with an effort to be cheerful. "Dismiss all such fears, and lift up your heart to God in thankfulness that you have won the love of a good man—the best prize any woman can win."

The departure of the bride and bridegroom was

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hastened, and the clock in the tower of Stratton had just struck twelve, when the lumbering coach rolled off on its journey towards London, escorted by two servants on horseback, well armed, and followed by a baggage waggon in which some of the household found a place.

There was a large gathering in the hall to bid the bride and Louis God-speed, and Madame de Massué, with the child-like change of mood, to which she was subject, was now quite ready to receive congratulations on her son's marriage, and to feel some pride in the fact that he was so well thought of at Stratton by its noble master and mistress, and that her two daughters were treated as friends rather than dependants by Lady Russell. Madame de Massué was also pleased with her smart gown of grey brocade, which had been hastily got up from Lady Russell's wardrobe, and she fingered the fine lace of the kerchief with evident pleasure.

Clarice was in the nursery with the children, the household were all leaving the hall, when Richard went up to Clémence and said:

"It makes me sad to see you thus, tired and pale. Why did you not tell me you were sick? Why keep me in ignorance?"

"I can tell you better, dear Richard," Clémence said, "by word than by letter; nor did I care to grieve you. Take me to the summer-house on the terrace, and I will then hide nothing from you."

With a sinking at heart, of which Richard had never felt the like before, he drew Clémence's hand through



his arm, and they walked together to the little summer-house which was a favourite resort of Lady Russell. Presently Clémence stopped and said:

“Wait one minute till I get breath.”

Richard did as she bade him, and put his strong arm round her to support her.

“There! I am better now,” she said. “It is nothing, do not look so sad, Richard.”

“But I am sad, I am distressed. You have been left here with your mother, and she has worn you to death, while Clarice and Faith Jenkyns have been living in ease. It is a shame to think of it!”

“Hush, Richard, do not speak thus. I caught a bad rheum at Easter-tide, and it was the fault of no one but myself. I went forth in the early morn to a sick woman, and the rain came on, and I had no cloak, and the cottage was hot, and so—”

“And no one cared, it seems—but I care now, and I will have my way, I will not be gainsaid.”

Clémence sank on the seat in the summer-house, and again was breathless and exhausted. Richard knelt by her, holding her hand and murmuring tender words. Presently she recovered herself, and said with a smile:

“I cannot ever be your wife, dear Richard. Give up all thought of it, I pray you!”

“I will *not*, by Heaven!” Richard exclaimed. “You shall come to me as soon as my father will make me a decent allowance. You shall be the light of my home, my father will bless you for all you have done for me.”

Clémence gently stroked Richard’s bowed head and said:



"Dear heart, I am not fitted for any earthly home, but," she added, "I shall ever love you. When I am gone from you I shall be near you, Richard, in spirit, and you will be true to your promise for my sake."

"My promise," he faltered, "my promise was to love and cherish you always."

"There was another you made me. Do not forget it. Never forget, Richard—to love and serve God, and lead a new life, following His commandments, and walking henceforth in His holy ways."

Unconsciously she used the familiar words of the Liturgy she had learned to love, and added:

"Renew that promise, Richard, and make me happy."

"I will renew it, but you must be with me, or I can never fulfil it. You must not leave me, Clémence, my love, my life!"

"It must be as God wills," she said. "I am ready to do as He would have me. We cannot choose our lot for ourselves—it is ordered for us by Him."

Steps were heard approaching now, and Richard sprang to his feet.

"Dinner was served," a servant announced, "and my lord and lady were already in the hall."

Then Richard led Clémence back by the hand with tenderest care, and watched her with renewed hope as he saw her take her place at the board between Clarice and her mother, a sweet smile on her lips, and a bright colour on her cheeks.

"She is not so sick after all," Richard thought. "I shall make instant arrangements to take her from this



place, and Clarice must look after that mother of theirs, who, thank Heaven, is not my mother. I could not away with her folly and whims, any more than good Mistress Bunce at the Chequers did, or old Abigail either. Little Mistress Rachel yonder has ten times more sense."

And thus, as ever in our complex and uncertain life, the great events which touch the welfare of thousands, affect us less than the carking care or sorrow, or, it may be, the fulfilled joy, which lies hid in the heart, and with which no stranger can intermeddle.

For the time at least Richard Cheeke forgot the weighty importance of what was passing in London, which he had ridden so hard to communicate to Lord Russell, in the mingled love and dread which possessed him when he had seen Clémence, and heard from her that she believed herself to be too ill ever to be his wife.

It was so, also, with Faith and Louis de Massué, as they jolted along the uneven roads towards the great city. The joy of being together, and the happy sense of being at last unalterably bound to one another by the most sacred tie, made them all but unmindful of what might lie before them at Southampton House when they reached it—almost forgetful of the danger in which their best friends might even now be standing, and of the peril of many who stood up for the freedom and liberties of their country.

It was not till this, their first day of married life, that Faith heard from Louis's lips the story of poor little Esther's sin and its consequences. With a chivalrous



desire to be gentle and lenient in his judgment of her, Louis had simply told Faith that he had learnt from her the real reason of the miscarriage of his letter. He had quieted Richard Cheeke's questions and inquiries in the same way, passing over the actual offence which Esther had committed in opening and reading the letter, and the lie she had told his messenger. Now, as he expected, Faith was only filled with deep pity for her, and said, as soon as they got to the Hague, she would find her out, and do all she could to show her forgiveness.

"She was ever a strange mixture of goodness and naughtiness, and I was to blame not to have any power over her. We all treated her as naughty and troublesome, and my father was harsh to her, forcing on her religious exercises during the long dull Sabbaths when the household were reprov'd for laughter, and forbidden to do aught but attend the meetings of Separatists, and listen to long, long sermons, which make me tired now to think of," Faith said, with a sigh; and then added: "Perhaps it was as my father told me, my heart was not right with God when I complained. At Stratton I have learned a more excellent way, and I love the services of the Church, but still more do I love the gracious lady who has shown us—Clarice and me—the beauty of home-life springing from its teaching."

"Alas! poor lady," Louis de Massué said, the grave matters lying before him now beginning to assert themselves, and shadow his new-found happiness. "She does not realise how my lord is surrounded by enemies, lying in wait for him to entangle him in their meshes. My first



care when we arrive at Southampton House must be to write to the Marquis of Ruvigny and enclose a letter from his niece, Lady Russell, and strengthen her appeal, that he would be ready to come to England to defend my lord, if false accusations are brought against him."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE STORM BURSTS.

JULY 1683. Lord Russell and his faithful friend, the Dean of Canterbury, were not long in following Louis de Massué and Faith to Southampton House.

Lady Russell and her children arrived a week later.

The few days which passed after the recovery of the boy, so precious to both husband and wife, were like the deceitful calm of the river before it leaps down in a foaming torrent, over rocks which impede its progress to a lower level. For new and startling events came thick and fast, and Lady Russell was content to leave the children to the care of Faith, and other trusted friends and servants, and give herself wholly to the concerns of her husband. Never, for one moment, did the courage and calm resolution of this noble woman forsake her, in her husband's presence.

Dr. Burnet was frequently in consultation at Southampton House, and he, with Dr. Tillotson, were amongst Lord Russell's most valued counsellors.

Lady Russell was at her writing-table in the room where Louis first saw her on his arrival in London, engrossed with letters lying before her, when he came hastily in, to say that Dr. Burnet desired to see her.

"Let him come, Louis, he is ever welcome." Then,



rising with a smile, she said: "I am never too busy to greet you, good doctor."

Dr. Burnet's usually bright, good-tempered face was clouded with anxiety.

"I have news," he said. "Where is my lord? I had a visit from Lord Howard but two days ago, who then assured me there was no proof of this plot at Rye, and that there was no truth in the pretended discovery. But a proclamation is out for seizing some who could not be found; Rich has delivered himself up, and Rumsey followed. These two men have, before the Council, named Lord Russell as accessory to the plot, and the Duke of Monmouth and the Council have summoned the King to London, declaring that they dare not go further without his presence and leave granted."

"Does my lord know of this?"

"I cannot tell: he may have heard it, but as you are aware, dear lady, he is called to the funeral of a friend a few miles from the city, where he would do well to stay."

"My lord returns this day or to-morrow," Lady Russell said, "nor would the danger which threatens keep him away. But you do not suppose that he can be proved to have aught to do with this infamous plot. An incredible story from first to last. My lord will face the Council, and clear himself from all these vile accusations."

"God grant it, God grant it," Dr. Burnet said earnestly; "the issues of life and death are in His hands."

"Meantime," Lady Russell said, "I would not shun advice, and I will seek it on the morrow under guard



of my trusty kinsman Louis—I doubt not, as this rumour spreads, many will come hither to learn the truth.”

Lady Russell was right, the relations on both sides of the house soon flocked to hear what was really true. Lord Russell’s father, tremulous and unable to conceal his emotion; Lady Allington, Lady Elizabeth Noel, Dr. Fitzwilliam, and many others, who waited in anxious deliberation for Lord Russell’s return.

It was strange to notice that the two people principally concerned in these grave matters were the calmest and most collected. For, when Lord Russell entered the room late on this evening, he did not seem greatly disturbed.

“Yes,” he said, “I know of the Council’s action, and methinks it is well that they have summoned the King.”

“And what of my Lord Howard, my dear son?” the Earl of Bedford asked.

“What of him?” Lord Russell said, his lip curling with scorn, “he is in mortal terror now Rich and Rumsey have turned informers, though he swore to me not many hours ago that he knew of no plot, and that the whole is a fabrication. But a white face and quivering lip, and knees knocking together, do not wear the semblance of innocence. I care not to speak of him, lest personal hatred should make me guilty of injustice.” Then Lord Russell turned to his wife, and said: “We need not let our friends go hungry away, sweetheart, so let us have supper served. I hope you will all join us. Ah! and here is the good Dean to make our company complete.”



Dr. Tillotson looked surprised at Lord Russell's cheerful manner.

"You have heard the news, my lord; it is in everyone's mouth."

"Yes, I have heard it, but we will not starve on it, good Dean, such news is hard food, for my dear father and all these good friends and kinsmen."

That night when Lady Russell went to the room which was appointed for the use of Louis de Massué and his bride, she found Faith busy with her pen, copying some papers for her husband.

"Dear child," Lady Russell said, seating herself on a couch, and lying back as if very weary, "dear child, this is but a sorry honeymoon for you, with grave matters in everyone's mind. The King is summoned by the Council, and it is certain my lord will be called before it on his return, to give denial to the charge brought against him and others. You have the pen of a ready-writer, keep some notes of what passes, that a true record may be preserved. I pray God, not a long or a heavy one, but who can tell?"

"I will do as you wish, dear lady," Faith said. "I have been so well used to transcribe letters for my father that my quill can run more freely than most. Louis praises my writing," she added, "as easy to read. He has to despatch tidings to the Hague, and of these he keeps a fair copy. I was engaged on one of these when you came in."

A tap at the door was now heard, and a little face peeped in.

"Mistress Faith, we do so want to bid our mother good-night—" then a sudden joyful cry. "She is here!"



she is here!" and forgetting in their delight the customary curtesy which was held to be good manners in those days when children entered their parents' presence, the two little girls sprang towards their mother and covered her with kisses.

"We did not see you this morning, mother, and last night we were asleep before you came to bid us good-night. Dear mother, let us all go home to Stratton; why do we come to London in the summer?"

"We will return to Stratton ere long, dear children, meanwhile be patient."

"We want father, 'little master' cried to-day, because he had not seen 'best father.'"

"He shall see him soon every day," Lady Russell said; "and now, dear little ones, let us have our prayers together, and then away to bed, where I will come anon."

The little girls looked wistfully into their mother's face, as if there was something there they did not quite understand, something unusual, and which baffled them. But on their mother's bidding they knelt with her and Faith, and repeated their simple prayers, waiting for hers, which always followed, commending them and "little master" and "the best of fathers" to God!

But to-night there was a pause, so long, that Rachel put up her hand to draw her mother's from her face, which was hidden by them. Then the child whispered:

"Mother is crying! the 'little master' is quite well—oh, mother!"

In a moment, Lady Russell recovered herself; she hastily brushed away her tears, and in a calm, low



voice prayed as was her wont for her children by name, and for their "honoured and beloved father," and then rising, she bade them run quietly to their nurseries, and perhaps, on the morrow, she would go with them to the river bank to feed the swans. That morrow brought too many anxieties, and there was no happy visit to the swans for the children.

Before breakfast had been served in the large hall, Lord Russell's faithful servant, Taunton, came to tell him the principal entrance to Southampton House was watched, and that it was by a messenger from the Council.

"The back gate is unguarded, my lord," Taunton said significantly.

"Which means I may escape by that way if so I choose, but I do not choose, good Taunton. Nay, Rachel," he continued, "why should I flee like a guilty man?" But, seeing her vain effort to preserve her usual cheerful manner, he said: "I will not be obstinate, dear heart, go and take counsel with our friends, and bring me back word which way their advice points. Louis shall be with you, and—here is Richard Cheeke. What now, Richard? More bad news?"

"My lord, there is nought but bad news, and my own share is not the least. But I will not trouble you with my grief now. I have been with my father, and endeavouring to move him to give me the power to bring one I love to a home where she can be tended and cared for. This by way of explanation; had it not been urgent, I should have followed you to London ere this. But now," Richard said, "I am at your service; command me and I am ready."



"I must prepare to go out," Lady Russell said, "and consult my friends; there is a watch set upon the house, and my lord is determined not to leave it by the back entrance. I would fain he saw it well to do so and if the advice I gather from those who love him is the same as mine, he will act on it."

Before Lady Russell left the room, she bade Louis and Richard sit down at the board and eat freely of a good breakfast, for she said:

"We have a long and toilsome day before us, and we must not be unprepared."

Then she seated herself in her accustomed place by Lord Russell's side, and set an example to those about her by calling for a goodly slice of pressed beef and a cup of wine, of which she seldom partook at breakfast, generally drinking a draught of pure water.

When Lord Russell and his wife had left the hall, Louis beckoned Faith to come nearer, and said:

"What is your news, Richard? Can I—can we do ought for you?"

Richard sighed heavily, and said:

"Yes, if you will persuade Clémence to marry me forthwith. My father has yielded to my wishes. A small house belonging to him in Lincoln's Inn Fields is granted to me. There I can have her under the watchful eye of a physician, other than that dull country surgeon. Dr. King saved Lord Russell's child by timely advice, and it may be the same now. I cannot, no, I swear I cannot give up Clémence."

"And you would leave Clarice, then, with my mother at Stratton?"

"Nay, I will undertake the whole family," Richard



said. "Yes, even madame herself. Pardon me, good Louis, but I find your mother somewhat of a hindrance; yet, if you will only aid me to carry out my scheme, I will promise to act a son's part to her. No offence to you, Louis, but madame is somewhat contrary in her moods. She will and she won't, as the fit takes her, and forsooth, one might think that she was ill and that Clémence was well. She is ever urging her to do what she has no strength to perform."

"But, Richard," Faith said, now speaking for the first time, "are you not urging dear Clémence to exertion for which she is unfitted. A journey! city air! surely the greatest doctor in the world would scarce compensate for this fatigue."

Richard rose hastily.

"I see you are not likely to help me. You are both against me, but I may carry out my plan in spite of you. You cannot know all that hangs on this matter. If I lose her, God knows into what abyss I may fall. But . . ." he added, "I will keep her, and love shall win her back to life. It is often so," he said bitterly; "those who have reached the goal of their desires, have but scant pity for others to whom such bliss is denied."

"Nay, Richard, that is an ungenerous assertion; Clémence is my sister, and dear to me and to us all; let the matter rest till I can find out Clarice's mind."

"Nay, Richard," Faith said, "do not be embittered by your anxiety, is there not an example before our eyes, that such anxieties do but sweeten our dear lady in her present distress."

Richard had no time to reply, for a servant came



to say that his lady waited in the ante-room, and a coach was in readiness to start, and his lady begged Monsieur de Massué and Master Cheeke to hasten to join her.

That day was spent by Lady Russell in gathering the opinions of her friends, many of them in exalted positions, some about the Court well fitted to judge whether it were expedient for Lord Russell to depart, or stay and await the further order of the Council.

Lady Russell returned in the evening, saying:

"The balance is in favour of your remaining here, on the assurance, dear heart, that you have nought to fear by staying, and that your going off in a manner secretly, would be a confession of guilt. So now we will wait as patiently as may be for further news, which will doubtless be sent as soon as the King's will is known."

The expected messenger arrived the next day, and Lord Russell was summoned before the King and Council.

Long hours of suspense followed, and every member of the family, and many outside it, were feverishly anxious to hear the result of his examination. Lady Russell was alone when the sound of footsteps in the ante-chamber made her start to her feet. She was springing forward to meet, as she hoped, her husband, when Louis de Massué pulled aside the tapestry curtain which divided the room from the small ante-chamber, and said, in a voice of deep feeling:

"Taunton is here, madam, and would fain see you."

"Taunton!" Lady Russell said. "Let him come in," then, as Taunton advanced with bowed head, and signs



of strong emotion on his face, she asked: "What news of my Lord, Taunton?"

"Alas, madam, my Lord is sent a close prisoner to the Tower."

Lady Russell's face was pale as death.

"A prisoner!"

"Yes, madam; my Lord said to me ere I left him, that his enemies had sworn falsely against him, and that the devil is let loose."

Taunton had scarcely delivered his message when the Earl of Bedford arrived, with several of Lord Russell's near relations and faithful friends. In broken accents the father described what he had heard from a witness, of his son's noble demeanour before the Council.

"The whole thing turns on that meeting at Shepherd's Wine Vaults. Rumsey, the vile informer, swears that he carried thither a message requiring a speedy answer; and that he received a reply to the effect that a certain man named Trenchard had failed them at a town in Somersetshire, where a rising was planned. Of this my dear son denied all knowledge, and though the King said he did not believe he had any design against his person, yet he had evil designs upon the government, and must be put on his trial."

Dr. Burnet and the Dean of Canterbury were the next arrivals, and only confirmed the tidings, and said a committee of the King's Council was deputed to examine Lord Russell in the Tower on the following day.

"Meanwhile, let us wait, and hope and pray."

"But we must act also," Lady Russell said. "What



will it be best to do? Let us take counsel together. Surely appeal will not be in vain, nor will the King be so deaf to the voice of justice as to hear only one side of this matter. Be of good courage, dearest father," Lady Russell said, going up to the chair where Lord Bedford sat, with his head bowed on his hands. "Be of good courage, we will not believe that a noble and loyal man can be suffered to be done to death by false swearers, on whom may God have mercy. See, I, his wife, keep a brave heart; do not despair, dear father."

As Lady Russell laid a caressing hand on the Earl's shoulder, he raised his head, caught her hand and covered it with kisses.

"I thank God," he said, "my son has a wife who thus can hope when hope is dying in the breast of others. May He bless and reward you, my dear daughter, for what you have been to my son hitherto, faithful and loving."

"And by His help will be so for life or death," she said in a low voice, which only reached the ear of him for whom the words were intended.

From this moment Lady Russell had but the single aim of supporting and comforting others in the midst of her own heavy anxieties. To all around her she was calm, and yet full of energy, listening to every plan devised for the benefit of Lord Russell, and spending days in consultation with her friends and advisers, and nights in prayer for strength and resolution to carry out, what seemed to her the best measures to adopt.

But no earthly eye watched the struggle of that noble heart, where lurked the secret fear that all effort



would be in vain, and that the one whom she loved with the intensest love any wife ever felt for any husband, would fall under the weight of the false accusations brought against him.

As the days went on the tide of false accusations and false swearing grew and strengthened. It was like the rush of a gathering flood, devastating in its course many homes, and bringing sorrow and desolation to many hearts, which no power could avail to stem.

Through Lord Howard's infamous conduct, turning informer in the hope of saving his own life and freeing himself from blame, Lord Essex and Algernon Sidney, as well as Lord Russell, were brought to trial.

The air was thick with rumours, the word of many was proved to be false, so that every man distrusted his neighbour, and the court and city alike were filled with dread, not knowing who might be implicated next; for every word that was spoken on public matters might be laid hold of and turned against himself or his friends. The dread and dismay of what might happen next reached even to the highest place, for the King, touched in his tenderest part for the safety of his favourite son, the Duke of Monmouth, is said to have gone in tears to the mansion occupied by the Duchess, and told her that he had given orders that her house was not to be searched, so that she might conceal her husband there, and feel secure. But the general mistrust and want of faith in any such assurance, made the Duke of Monmouth leave his own home, with the significant words, that he placed no confidence in the King's promise. And, indeed, the Duke knew his father better than his wife, who was willing to trust his protestation that he

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would not suffer her house to be searched. The first place which was ransacked to discover him were the very rooms which, on the word of the King, were to be exempted from such search; and the Duke was freely spoken of as being mixed up with the Rye House Plot and the meeting at Shepherd's Wine Vaults.

It is well to dwell on some of the brighter spots of this dark history of crime and intrigue, and there can be no doubt that the Duke of Monmouth sent to Lord Russell to say that he would deliver himself up, and stand or fall with him; a generous impulse, met by one no less generous and noble, when the proposal was resolutely declined.

The events of the days lying between the eighteenth of June 1683 and the twenty-third of July, may be told by one who, in compliance with her mistress's wishes, kept a record of the hours as they passed, and condensed the narrative in the form of a letter to Clarice de Massué at Stratton.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

## DEATH AND LIFE.

JULY 1683. The twenty-first day of July had been dull and gloomy. There was a heaviness in the air, and darkness in the brooding sky, which seemed to oppress those who were anxiously waiting at Stratton for news. Clémence was slowly but surely passing away, though now and again there was a flickering of the flame of life, and those who watched her were sometimes deceived into the hope that, after all, she would live to be Richard Cheeke's wife, and be transferred by him to the home he had made ready for her. But, on every visit Clémence would put him off with a sad smile, and the promise that when she felt stronger she would do as he wished; and, in her own heart, Clarice knew that time would never come.

On this sultry evening Clémence's breath was short and laboured. She was lying on a couch by the open lattice, round which roses clustered, their fragrance borne upon the air which Clarice made, by fanning her sister as she stood at the head of her sofa. Madame de Massué had become at last aware of the hopelessness of her child's condition, and the maternal love which, under all her weaknesses and little follies, was really strong within her, asserted itself. She forgot now all her fancied ailments, and was touchingly anxious to



do everything Clémence wished: even to be silent when she sat with her, and to cease to comment on her symptoms, or to lament that she had not gone sooner to London for the benefit of Dr. King's advice.

Abigail and Clarice shared the nursing between them, and indeed this was not arduous. Clémence was patient and gentle in sickness as she had been in health; no murmur passed her lips, and she had a smile and thanks ready for anything that was done for her.

Twilight was deepening, and the song of the birds had ceased. The drowsy sound of the cow-bells in the meadows, and the melancholy hoot of the owls in the woods not far off alone broke the silence.

"Will no tidings come?—it is getting so late."

"None will come to-night, dear one," Clarice said.

"Perhaps there was a reprieve at the last—perhaps—"

Clarice knew where her sister's thoughts were, and she said:

"God knows—it may be so."

But, as the words left her lips, she knew it was but the slender thread of hope which, while life lasts, we all cherish, so long as the irrevocable blow has not actually fallen.

Madame de Massué had, by Abigail's advice, gone to her bed, and the two sisters were alone together. Dark figures were seen in the gloaming, passing across the path leading from the house towards the keeper's cottage, and Clarice knew they were some of the servants and household, waiting at the corner by the high road, and watching for a messenger. There was not a loyal heart in Stratton that day which was not



filled with anguish and sorrow for their master, and perhaps even more for their honoured mistress. The sentence had been passed—that news had been brought by Richard Cheeke a few days before—but almost everyone clung to the hope that a pardon would be granted, and that Lord Russell's life would be spared.

About nine o'clock there was a rift in the clouds, and the evening star shone out with radiant loveliness.

"Look, Clarice, is it not like a message from another world—the darkness of earth cannot dim the light of heaven. I am better now; stop fanning, dear, and sit down—how tired you must be."

Clarice laid aside the fan, and pouring out a reviving draught put it to her sister's lips, saying:

"Shall I call Abigail to lift you to bed, dear?"

"No, let me lie here, I know he will come with news before long."

Clarice did not like to thwart her sister's wish, and seating herself on a low stool by her side, she laid her head against the pillows of the couch and holding Clémence's hand, she fell into a light doze.

The clock in the belfry tower of Stratton House chimed twelve, when Clarice was awake by the sound of footsteps drawing near. Afraid of startling her sister, she rose gently and felt her way to the door, for the small lamp hanging from the ceiling had gone out. Abigail was first in the passage, and before opening the door, she asked:

"Is that you, Master Cheeke?"

"Yes, admit me."

The voice was low and husky, for Richard Cheeke had ridden hard on relays of horses from London on



that memorable July day. Clarice could scarcely ask the question:

"What news?"

"It is over!" was the answer. "The noblest and best of men is dead, and his wife a widow."

Overcome with emotion and fatigue Richard staggered against the wall and murmured:

"What news here?"

Clarice had not time to answer, when a sweet clear voice from the parlour called him by name:

"Richard! I knew you would come."

"My sweetheart!" he said, rallying as he flung himself on his knees by her side. "How fares it with you?"

"Very well," was the answer. "It has been a long day, but now it is over. Tell me your news."

"They have had their will," Richard said, restraining himself for Clémence's sake. "They have had their will, and my lord is dead."

It was strange, Clarice thought, that Clémence, whose weary longing had been for days past to know how it fared with the friends they all so loved and honoured, should now take the dreaded news so quietly.

"He is at peace," she said, "he is at peace. No evil tongues can hurt him now. Pity—pity those who are left—not him who is gone. Tell me all, Richard."

Was it the strange apathy of approaching death that had come over Clémence? For, lying on the borderland, earth's hopes and joys and griefs do often fade and lose their power, so that in departing the dying seem scarcely to feel regret. The bitterness of parting is for those left on this side of the river of



Death, not for those who, with their feet in the cold waters, can smile as they go, seeing perhaps light on the further shore—yes, and the Form of One who has conquered and overcome for them the sharpness of death.

“Louis and Faith?” Clémence asked presently. “I know Faith has been a comfort.”

“An untold support and comfort,” Richard said. “And Louis also. Faith has prepared a packet,” Richard went on, turning towards Clarice, who, standing apart, was weeping bitterly, “in which she has told all which none could tell as well, and on the morrow, or it may be later, you will read for yourselves the story. Such a story, verily, of devotion and wondrous power of love as was, I think, never rehearsed before.”

“I would fain hear more now,” Clémence said. Then when Clarice and Abigail objected, telling her she must have her quieting potion and be carried to bed, she begged to be left on the couch. “It tires me to be carried now, let me rest.”

They did not press her further, and so in that little parlour, shaded by the rose branches laden with blossom, the night passed. Richard Cheeke, worn out with sorrow, and the anxious unrest of the last few days, had drunk a draught which Abigail had prepared for him, and rolling himself up in his cloak he slept the sleep of exhaustion. Abigail would fain have sent Clarice to her bed, but she begged to be left with Clémence, and so the short night passed.

Clémence was very quiet, and by her gentle breathing Clarice thought she was asleep, but when the dawn strengthened she saw her eyes were open, and fixed on



the glow in the eastern sky, the harbinger of a new and brighter day. Presently Clémence raised herself on her elbow, and looked down on Richard as he lay with all his heavy curls tossed back from his forehead, one arm under his head and the other holding the folds of his riding-coat wrapped round him.

"Poor Richard!" she said. "Dear, when I am gone he will turn to you for comfort—I know he will. You will never forget Richard, but remember that I loved him, and love him for my sake."

"I will do all you wish, sweet sister, but no love can replace yours."

"I shall love him still," Clémence said. "Death does not end love." Presently she exclaimed: "When he wakes I hope he will tell us more—how our dear lady bore herself and how they parted, those two who were so bound together."

"It must needs have been hard," Clarice said. "But do not give yourself pain, weak as you are, by thinking too much of it."

"It may be," Clémence said, after a pause, "that because I am so near death myself, this cruel death of the noblest of men cannot make me as sad as it makes you, who have life before you. What are those words: 'The exceeding weight of glory'—an exchange from an exceeding weight of woe. They came to me once in Canterbury Cathedral, when I heard them read in Dr. Tillotson's strong voice, and I thought of the exceeding weight of glory which thousands who had suffered were now rejoicing in. Our dear lady will rejoice too, one day."



"You seem so ready to leave us," Clarice said, almost reproachfully.

"I have come to be ready, dear, but at first I was not ready. I did long to live, for Richard's sake—yes, and for my own. But that longing is all past now."

Richard Cheeke had to return to London the next day. Clémence seemed so much stronger that hope once more took possession of him. Madame de Massué was only too eager to share that hope, and it was with a sinking heart that Clarice heard them discussing which would be the easiest way of transporting Clémence to her new home. Richard was almost angry with Clarice and Abigail for not entering into the plan, and he bade farewell to Clémence, cherishing a false hope, and wilfully blinding himself to her real condition.

"Did she know it was the last farewell?" Clarice wondered, when she saw her sister raise herself on her pillows, and with her thin white fingers gather a rose which had struggled in at the open casement and fasten it in his surtout. Did she wish to part from him with that smile, so bright and sweet that he exclaimed:

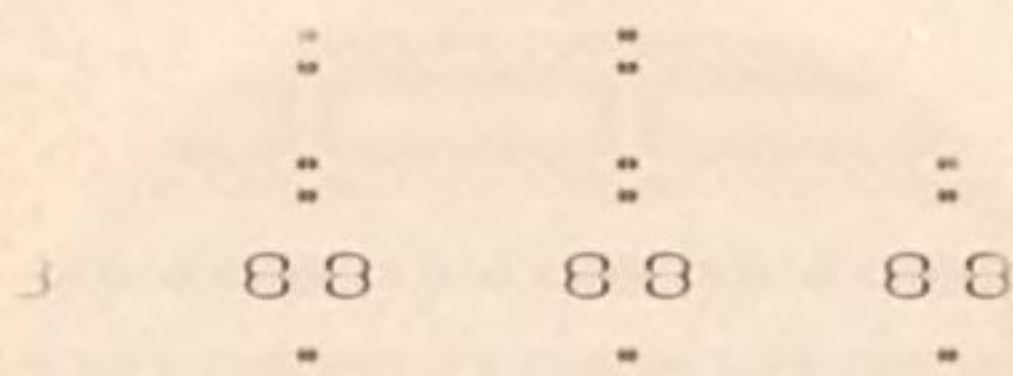
"Ah, yes, sweetheart! you are better, and I shall see the colour of this flower in your cheeks next time I come."

That colour of which he spoke was only too vivid now, as Clémence said:

"Next time? Yes, dear, next time, when that time comes!"

Then their lips met in a long farewell kiss, and Clémence sinking back on her pillows, said in a low voice to Clarice:

"I have made it easy for him to leave me—it was





the last thing I could do for him, except to pray God to keep him safe till the *next time!*”

She lived longer than anyone had expected, and heard the contents of Faith's letter, which was sent with other despatches by special messenger to Stratton the next day. Faith's letter was endorsed:

“Having written at the request of my dear and honoured mistress, Lady Russell, some account of these last days, I have transcribed it here for the information of my dear sisters, Clarice and Clemence de Massué, who, being far away from all that has passed, would fain learn such sad particulars as I, who have been on the spot, can give. Those scenes of which I was not an eye-witness have been recounted to me day by day by my dear husband, Louis de Massué.

“It was on the evening of the day that a watch was set on Souphampton House, and news was brought that the Council had summoned the King on the matter of what is called the Rye House Plot, that, at the desire of my dear lady, I first endeavoured to set down the events which happened, in some order. From those jottings I have written a connected narrative, of which the following is as fair a copy as my hand, somewhat tired with holding a quill, can achieve.

“From the moment when my lord was sent a close prisoner to the Tower, my lady set herself with wonderful calmness to compass all means for clearing him from the suspicion cast upon him. Great hopes were set on the effect my lady's uncle, the Marquis de Ruvigny, might have in persuading his King Louis to ap-



proach our King Charles on behalf of my lord. But, although the Marquis replied that he was impatient to be with her in her distress after the cruel sentence was passed, and that his King had consented to his journey to London bearing a letter praying for the pardon of my lord, naught came of it. The Marquis did not arrive, and my husband judges him, it may be, too harshly, on that account.

“The days, as I have said, before my lord was brought to the Bar of the Old Bailey, were spent by my lady in preparation for his defence. She visited his counsel and entered into the matter, with extraordinary wisdom and intelligence, commanding respect and admiration.

“On the day before the trial my lady came to my room and said she had permission from my lord to be present in the Court and assist him, if it were needful, by writing. When I said, ‘Will it not be too great a demand, dear madam, even on your courage?’ she replied:

“‘My friends believe I can do him service, and I will try. I have assured my lord that my resolution will hold out, and I beseech him to let his also. It may be that the Court will not permit me to be with him, but I am determined to try.’”

“This my lady said before she went to her children as was her custom every night, to read a few verses from the Bible with them and pray. It was my blessed privilege to be with them then, and on this evening of the 12th of July, the scene was one to be graven for ever on my memory. My lady bade the children remember that their father, being wrongfully accused, was to be



put on his trial on the morrow—and that they were to bear him in mind all day, and ask God to help him to endure bravely what he was called on to endure. Rachel and Catherine were old enough to enter somewhat into the position in which their father stood, though I am quite sure they did not understand all that might be in store. The ‘little master’ could only wonder why a few quiet tears fell from his mother’s eyes.

“‘I am a good boy,’ he said, as if to comfort her. ‘Tell “best father” I am a good boy.’

“This was too much for my lady’s composure, she caught the child to her breast, sobbing out:

“‘Yes, dear “little master,” I will tell papa how he is.’

“I was, with others, with my lady the next day in attendance at the Court, and Louis succeeded in getting us places behind the bench where my lady sat.

“It was in a clear, strong voice that my lord pleaded ‘not guilty’ to the monstrous charge laid against him, of conspiring to compass the death of the King and seizing the guards appointed to preserve the King’s person. No trial, surely, was ever worse conducted, that is to say, it was no fair trial at all. When my lord demanded a copy of the panel of the jury, they would have it, it was in his hands already; whereas it was only a list of names generally sworn as jurors, and not a panel. My lord asked to have the trial postponed till the afternoon, that he might have a proper list, and then challenge the jurors. My Lord Chief Justice refused this request, and how unjust was the refusal was proved by the fact that no less than thirty-one jurors were challenged and



objected to by my lord. This surely proves that his enemies had taken good care to select such jurors as would serve their own evil purposes.

"My lord's request for pen, ink and paper, and the use of any of his own documents, was granted. Then came his question:

"May I have somebody to help my memory?"

"To this the Chief Justice answered:

"Any of your servants shall assist in writing any thing you please."

"How can I express the look of love and pride in her, with which my lord turned to my lady, saying:

"My wife is here, my lord, to do it."

"My heart beat so, that I could scarce breathe when, as the Chief Justice said, 'If my lady please to give herself the trouble,' Lady Russell moved nearer to the bar, and looking up at her husband with a reassuring smile, bowed her head to the judges, and then gathering together the papers before her, applied herself to her task without any sign of emotion.

"It will not be needful for me to write out at length, for those for whom this narrative is designed, namely, my sisters and friends in the household at Stratton—the full particulars of that shameful trial. Louis has them all set down at my lady's order, but my history of these days is mainly to show what courage, what devotion, what marvellous power of mind our noble lady has shown.

"The meeting at Sheppard's Wine Vaults was seized upon as almost the chiefest handle against my lord. But in good truth Sheppard's evidence broke down. He stumbled and hesitated, and the upshot of it all



was, that he could not be positive when Lord Russell was in his vaults, nor how often—it was so long ago, he said—eight or nine months. My lord then said, ‘I can prove I was in the country at that time, and Colonel Rumsey has sworn there was but one meeting at Sheppard’s.’

“This man Rumsey then tried to slide out of what he had sworn, and said he had heard from Mr. Ferguson that my lord had been present at the debate as to the formation of the plot with Lord Shaftesbury.

“The most pitiable figure of those who were called to witness against my lord was Lord Howard. He came up to the witness-box pale and trembling and what he said could scarce be heard. No wonder he felt ready to sink, the shocking news of my Lord Essex’s death having just reached the Court. He proceeded, however, to do his utmost to take the life of a fresh victim, while wiping away his Judas-like tears for the death of another.

“My Lord Essex would not attempt to escape, from the fear that his flight might be injurious to Lord Russell, the friend he loved and valued. It was this infamous Lord Howard who so informed against him also, that he was arrested and sent to the Tower. He was greatly overcome and could not rise above his fearful position. His lady, in reply to a sad message he sent to her, proved herself brave in this dire extremity, and begged him not to give way to depression, nor think of her or the children, but study to support his spirits till she could get leave to come to him in a day or two. But weighed down with sorrow for the condition of his friend, Lord Russell, and lacking the



support which so wonderfully helped my lord through his time of trial and condemnation, it is said that he met his death by his own hand. On this very day of which I am writing, he was found dead in his room in the Tower, with a gash in his throat, inflicted, it is reported, by himself.

“A thrill of horror seemed to pass through the Court as the news spread, and for one moment my lord covered his face with his hands, overcome with emotion. Even then my lady did not falter; doubtless she dreaded to give vent to a single tear, lest the flood-gates should be opened, and she should prove unequal to the task she had undertaken. She remained steadfast to the end; while those who loved her had much ado to preserve their calmness. She possessed her soul with patience, and put out all her strength for the sake of him who was dearer to her than life itself. It was indeed as once in ages long past, ‘the false witnesses did not agree together,’ but whether or no it would have been the same. Everyone was impressed with the evidence given by good Dr. Burnet, who said that Lord Howard, who had given such full details and particulars of this plot, had solemnly denied not long before, in Dr. Burnet’s presence, that he knew aught of any plot whatsoever. How came it then that now he was so well informed of every incident connected with it? Surely this was a point worthy of consideration.

“Then there uprose many honourable men who spoke to the general excellence of my lord’s character. One good friend, to whom we owe so much, the Dean of Canterbury, who had known my lord intimately for many years, said in his clear, strong voice:

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“‘I have always judged my Lord Russell to be a person of great virtue and integrity. I always took him to be very far from entertaining such wicked designs as he stands here charged withal.’

“Then followed a Mr. Gore, who bore his testimony in words which we, who have of late lived under my lord’s roof, and seen him in the bliss of his home life, can attest as indeed most true. Mr. Gore said:

“‘I have been acquainted with my lord for some years, and conversed much with him. I take him to be one of the best sons, one of the best fathers, one of the best masters, one of the best husbands, one of the best friends, and one of the best Christians we have in this country.’

“Though many other people, high in the esteem of all, and peers of the realm, added their testimony to my lord’s worth, my Lord Duke of Somerset, and my Lord Clifford amongst them, no words seemed to touch my dear lady as did these. Her face was illuminated with a triumphant smile as she turned her head towards Mr. Edward Russell and his sister Margaret, who had accompanied her to the Court.

“After this, followed my lord’s noble speech, of which my lady has a copy in my lord’s own handwriting. Those who heard it as it fell from his lips can never forget it, but what did it avail? What could anything avail when the Court was biassed, and, as it is truly said, was hungry for the life of this great man?

“They won the day—the Solicitor-General made a speech for the prosecution, which was perhaps less bitter than that of Jeffries, who brought in the shocking death of Lord Essex, and termed him ‘an accomplice’



who, dreading the exposure of his guilt, had that day taken his life with his own hand!

“At the adjournment of the Court the pause, while awaiting the return of the jury, was perhaps the most painful time of all. We were all as if under a spell. No one spoke—scarce breathed. Louis came nearer to me, leaning on the back of the bench as if to give me the support of his presence. My lady—nay, I have no words to depict her as she sat just below my lord, with her pale face uplifted, her eyes seeking, as it might seem, help from on high.

“‘Vain is the help of man’: those words seemed to sound within me. ‘Vain—vain is the help of man. Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man.’

“My lord avoided looking at her whom he loved so well, but gazed straight before him, with his hands clasped tightly on a roll of papers which he held. It was in truth an agony of suspense for us all then present.

“At length the profound silence was broken by the jurors’ return. The great clock of the Old Bailey struck four in slow, sonorous tones, and as the sound of the last four strokes died away the verdict was given.

“‘Guilty of High Treason!’ And the doom of death was sealed.

“The sentence was passed on Saturday the 14th day of July. Louis was present then, and says my lord would fain have appealed against the legality of the indictment based on a statute of King Edward III., but the Recorder said such exception should have been taken before the verdict—it was too late now; both



Court and prisoner were bound by the verdict, and naught could change it.

“The next few days were passed in attempts to save this noble life. The Earl of Bedford, stricken with grief, offered money—thousands of pounds—to the King, which offer was refused. The plea of Lord Southampton’s devotion to the royal cause in the time of the great rebellion was urged—as surely my lady, his daughter, had a claim founded thereon. But nothing availed. The son of Louis’s kinsman, the Marquis de Ruvigny, it is said, begged the King of France to intercede with King Charles, but Louis doubts whether this be true. The Marquis himself promised to repair to London, but, as I have said, nothing came of that promise.

“Now in the deepest distress, my dear lady prevailed on my lord to indite petitions to the King himself, and to the Duke of York, promising to live out of the country, and never more meddle in affairs of state. And in thus asking for his life, it was for the sake of his afflicted father, and yet more for his wife and children, that he consented to appeal to the King. It seems almost beyond belief that such a heart-broken appeal as the old Earl’s, for mercy for a beloved son could be unheeded. Yet so it has been. Dr. Tillotson and Dr. Burnet did their best to bring my lord to retract his opinion, that a free people had a right to defend their liberties, nor withhold resistance when their religion, and such liberties were in danger to be taken from them, though under the pretence of law.

“Day after day passed, and my dear lady could not relinquish hope that all the efforts made would at last succeed. Lord Cavendish offered to change clothes with







turned with him, and the girls followed, but Louis, who brought them to the coach, said:

“‘My lady desires you to return to Southampton House, and the coach to be sent back for her anon.’

“Rachel and Catherine were too much awed to speak, but ‘little master,’ holding a sweet biscuit in his hand, said:—

“‘Best father gave me this at supper—we all had supper.’

“Dear child! At three years old he could scarce be expected to know what that parting meant. Death is but a name to little children.

“It was near eleven o’clock ere we, who were anxiously watching, knew by the sound of the coach wheels in the courtyard that my lady had returned. Her sister and many other relations were with her as she came slowly up the stairs. I was standing at the top; she turned on me a woe-struck look which rent my heart to see. There was now no need to wear a cheerful aspect for her lord’s sake. The long effort to preserve calmness was over. My lady looked as if years had passed over her, so lined and wan was her sweet face, as the heavy black hood fell from her head, and she leaned on the balustrade for support.

“Lady Elizabeth Noel, her dear and trusted sister, put her hand in hers, and said in a broken voice:—

“‘Come with me, dear heart!’

“‘Alone, alone, I pray you!’ was the reply. ‘I would fain be alone with God.’

“Then with faltering steps she passed down the corridor to the door of her own chamber, and closing it, we saw her no more. How that night passed till



the morning dawned, none can tell. My lord had said, when they parted:—

“‘Now the bitterness of death is past!’

“But it was not past for her, oh! not for her!

“It was through the kind thoughtfulness of Dr. Tillotson, that the sorrowing household at Southampton House heard on the evening of this sad day some details of the last hours of my lord. Dr. Tillotson and Dr. Burnet both visited my lady, and she begged them to gather the household together, and relating the calm dignity which her lord had shown in meeting death, desire their prayers for her and for themselves, that they might die the death of a righteous man.

“Dr. Tillotson remained, therefore, at Southampton House, while Dr. Burnet repaired to Bedford House to console, if possible, the poor afflicted father who needed consolation. As nearly as I can, I will set down here what Dr. Tillotson, after fervent prayer, related to the sad assembly, amongst whom we—that is, dear Louis and myself—were numbered. Taunton, broken-hearted, could not restrain his sobs as Dr. Tillotson told the story of his master’s last hours.

“‘It were impossible,’ Dr. Tillotson said, ‘to give you any account of the afflicting events of this day without a reference made to her—your much-loved lady—who has been, throughout a season of bitterest sorrow, an example of self-forgetfulness and love, which could so fill her heart that, for the sake of the beloved one, she bade farewell to my lord with calm composure. Such grief as hers is too big for utterance, or for me to dwell on. She now lies in her chamber prostrate, and unable even to rouse herself to take needful



nourishment. Yet I have heard her say to me, when I was privileged with Dr. Burnet to minister to her, "For his children's sake, God give me strength to live and do for them as their father would have me."

"My lord in those last hours dwelt much on the blessing such a wife had been to him, and he said it was by signal providence of God that he had possessed her. Her birth, her fortune, her great understanding, but more than these, her deep religion and tender kindness for him, how beyond conception they had been! And yet, he added, her carriage in her extremity had been above all. His good and faithful friend and servant, whose grief we must all commiserate, would fain have watched through the last night with his master; but this my lord refused. So peaceful was his mind, and so well was he prepared for death, that he slept as soundly as a child till awoke by Dr. Burnet. Later, I was with him, and prayed fervently; but he went into his own chamber, and prayed by himself several times. Truly, as he said, he had done with time, and eternity had come.

"It is scarce possible for me," Dr. Tillotson said in a broken voice, "to tell you of that ride in the coach to the place in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he was to die. But I would fain impress on your minds that the desire for the soul of his dearest friend, Lord Cavendish, made him return to him after they had parted, to press on him the necessity of preparation for death by a life of holiness. As we rode along, Dr. Burnet, myself, and my dear lord, he was cheerful,—though we had much ado to preserve our serenity,—he sang to himself as he went along one of the Psalms, and said he should sing



better soon. There were tears in the eyes of many as we passed, which touched him; but the cold stare and rudeness of some did not affect him.

“‘As the coach turned into Little Queen Street, he looked towards his own house, and a tear slowly rolled down his cheek. “For,” said he, “I have often turned that way with comfort,” picturing, no doubt, the blissful meetings he had known there with his wife and little ones.

“‘In forgiveness of all who had conspired against him, tender care for his friends, gratitude which he was pleased to express to my brother Burnet and myself, for our poor ministrations—he was, as he himself said, “*satisfied to die.*”

“‘This satisfaction was seen on his face as his head lay on the block, when, with uplifted hands, he was about meekly to receive the blow which was to separate him for ever from the cares and trials—ay, and the joys and bliss—of this unstable life. Satisfied! Yea, he will be more than satisfied when he awakes in the likeness of the Saviour of this sinful world.’

“When Dr. Tillotson had concluded this account of our dear master’s last hours there was silence, broken only by sighs and sobs from aching hearts. For some minutes this lasted. Then Dr. Tillotson pronounced the blessing, and Louis, putting his arm round me, drew me away to our own chamber, where we mingled together our tears—ay, and our prayers—that our wedded life might be led even as theirs, who by it, in joy and in deepest sorrow, had left an undying example of the purity and strength of the marriage tie, when it unites



two hearts in the confidence and assurance of mutual affection, blessed and sanctified by God.

"I have done my best to relate the events of the past few days, as I have witnessed them and heard of them from others. They are especially intended for the information of my dear sisters, Clémence and Clarice de Massué, and other members of the once happy household at Stratton, who may be yearning for tidings.

"I cannot say when I shall be with you, my dear ones, though I long to have the comfort of seeing Clémence. Richard Cheeke seems to think his hopes for her recovery and marriage are well founded. May God grant it!

"This from your loving sister, with my dutiful affection to my mother,

"FAITH DE MASSUÉ.

"Written by me at Southampton House, between the thirteenth and twenty-first day of July, 1683."

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## CHAPTER XV.

## REMINISCENCES.

1694. Lady Russell was seated in the spacious room at Southampton House one bright September morning eleven years after the bitter grief which had for ever cast a shadow over her earthly happiness.

But hers was not a nature to feed upon sorrow to the exclusion of duty. She had been a heroine in the midst of unexampled trials, and she had been no less heroic in the long years of her widowhood which she had devoted to the welfare of her children.

They had all left her now; and she had a letter open before her, which she read evidently with some difficulty, though with a smile on her lips. Lady Russell had lately undergone an operation for cataract, and although it had been pronounced successful, her eyes were weak, and she had often to dictate her numerous letters to her children and friends.

The curtain at the further end of the room was presently drawn aside and a servant announced:

"Madame de Massué would have an audience with your ladyship."

Lady Russell shaded her eyes with her hands and looked inquiringly towards the figure advancing up the room.



"Dear lady," Faith exclaimed, "you have not forgotten me?"

"Nay, surely, dear Faith," and Faith, kneeling by the chair where Lady Russell sat, covered her hands with kisses.

For a moment or two there was silence. Faith had not been in England since that time so fraught with saddest memories, and as she looked up into Lady Russell's face, she felt a pang at her heart as she saw how she was changed, changed from the happy devoted wife and mother, to the widow over whom the storm of sorrow had swept and left its traces.

"And what brings you to England?" Lady Russell said. "Is Louis with you?"

"Yes, the King required his presence. As you know he fills a post at the Hague, keeping his Majesty well-informed of events in Holland, and from time to time despatches are sent by special messengers. On this occasion he was summoned to come in person, and it is probable we shall return to the Hague with his Majesty."

"The children: How fares it with them?"

"I have left them under good care. Louis granted my wish to revisit England, for I had a strong yearning to see you, dearest lady, once again."

"Ah, Faith, it must needs be but a sad sight, a lonely woman who has but just escaped blindness, and whose joys, her best joys, are buried in the past. Nay," she added correcting herself, "I would rather say whose best joy is in the future, when I shall meet my beloved one in the land where no friend can ever go away or



any enemy enter. But let me not indulge in sadness, but turn to cheerfuller matters. In good sooth, this letter lying before me should make me glad, from little Cathy, my Lady Ross. Can you believe that 'Miss' is my Lady Cavendish — Catherine, my Lady Ross; and still more wonderful, 'little master' soon to be a married man. All so young yet! Yes, the children have vanished, and women and a tall stripling take their place. I have good reason to be satisfied with their settlement in life, though I could have desired to keep Catherine longer near me. This letter tells of her reception at Belvoir. Good Sir James Forbes delights to set forth all the honours heaped upon the bride and bridegroom. As I read them, I am fain to laugh especially at the preparation for the sack posset, which must indeed be extraordinary. So much was made that, though healths were drunk from great silver cups and tankards, the big silver cistern from which the posset was served was not emptied till midnight. I could not enter into the festivities, for such scenes\* are not for me, but I shall follow to Belvoir, when these fine rejoicings are over, and I can see my child in quiet in her new home. But now, dear Faith, give me a history of yourself, your good father and the poor ailing mother. I know you have the power of describing events, joys as well as sorrows, so let me hear all you can tell me."

"My father has so prospered at the Hague, dear lady, that he is held in high esteem. He has now a

\* Lady Russell's son, Lord Tavistock, was married when only fifteen to Miss Howland, a rich heiress in Surrey.



very fine house, and his wrought silver and gold are in constant request. With him Madame de Massué finds a home to her mind; and Esther performs a daughter's part. Abigail, as you know, is with her old master; though both she and our mother declared they should die if they crossed the sea, they both lived to do so."

"Esther!" Lady Russell exclaimed, "I had forgotten her!"

A bright colour came to Faith's fair face as she said:

"Esther Branstone was with us during Louis's long sickness from his wound. Her story is a sad one, but I think she is come out of the fire refined and purified. She escaped to Holland at the time I took refuge in Canterbury with Clémence and Clarice, to flee from the persecution of Edward Branstone. Esther wrought much mischief in those times, but she has repented and atoned for it. A good woman at the Hague rescued her from starvation and interceded with my father to receive her. She is but weakly in health, but she bears much from my poor mother-in-law, without complaint. And indeed," Faith said, "there is much to bear."

"Poor woman, is she still as full of whims and fancies?"

"Fuller, if it could be," Faith said, with a smile; "but she is my Louis's mother, and I strive to be lenient to her, as he is, for his sake. My father is loving and kind to me, and my boy and girl are ever a delight to him."



"The boy is like Louis, I suppose."

"No, madam, that is the mistake he has made; he is small and delicate in form and feature, and his hair is so fair his father calls him 'little silver-locks'; it is Clémence, whom we named in loving memory of our dear Clémence, that is like her father. Oh! dear lady, she is very lovely, so tall and full of grace, and with eyes that can flash upon occasion as if there were a light kindled behind them. She needs all my care and thought, whilst my boy is gentle as a lamb, and loves to be quiet and near his mother!"

"It is a fair picture of your wedded life, dear Faith," Lady Russell said. "I pray God it may please him to spare you to each other, and that you may see your children grow up in His faith and fear. I would say, prize the treasures while you have them, for the days must come to us all when the fine gold of life is changed, and the bliss of early married life is like a dream that cometh not again, a dream from which, for you, may there never be, as for me, a rude awakening and anguish of loss."

"We have spoken of all but our dear Clarice," Lady Russell said presently. "She is happy, though I know it is only by her constant watchfulness that Richard is kept to his work. At times I have heard her use somewhat sharper words when speaking to him than is quite seemly for a wife to address to a husband; but I am yet glad that good-natured, easy-tempered Richard should have such a makeweight to his somewhat flighty nature. I think the life at Stratton, in the post I have given him there as over-looker of some part of the



estate, is more suited to him than was the profession of the law, and Sir Thomas Cheeke is pleased to say that he approves the scheme."

"I have letters from Clarice, dear lady, which speak of your goodness, and the keeper's cottage is dear to her and to us all for the sake of Clemence, whose beautiful life is ever remembered as worthy of imitation. My boy is like her in his depth of feeling and early love for the truths of the Gospel. Louis will take me to Stratton before we leave England. This may be soon or late, according to his Majesty's pleasure."

"Have you presented yourself at Court yet?" Lady Russell asked.

"Nay, madam, we only arrived last night; my first thought was of you, and Louis will be here ere long to pay his dutiful respects to you."

"Dear Louis," Lady Russell said, "how well do I mind that evening when Richard Cheeke introduced my new kinsman. I was seated here at this very table with Rachel and Catherine writing to my dear lord, for never a day passed without our holding communication by letter when he was absent. Ah! Faith, it is this silence with the beloved of my soul, this deep impenetrable silence, which often makes me cry aloud for one word—for one sign—only one! But there is no voice, nor any to answer!"

For a few moments the tide of the past sorrow seemed to blot out the present. Lady Russell sat with folded hands and eyes closed as if she were waiting for that one word, or one sign, for which sad hearts in all time have craved from the departed. Then, as



Louis de Massué came in, she rallied quickly, rose and greeted him affectionately, and was soon discussing with him the events of the time, and the many changes which had altered the aspect of affairs during the last few years. And never in the history of this country had years been full of more momentous changes. One sovereign dying, and his successor coming to the throne only to flee, a deposed monarch, to France, but five short years after the cruel sentence of death was passed on the noble-hearted man who had died for devotion to the cause of liberty and the freedom of his country in religion and politics. The tyrannical rule of James worked his own ruin: he had sent seven Bishops to the Tower for daring to assert their independence; he had endeavoured in vain to thrust the Roman Catholic form of worship upon the people; and at last the reaction came, when, pressed hard by his enemies and betrayed by his friends, the King applied to the Earl of Bedford for help. The answer made by the father of Lord Russell is as pathetic as it is concise, and must have been as a sword piercing the King with remorse.

“Sir, I had a son who might have been here now, the support of your Majesty.”

The bloodless revolution of 1688 followed, and then the final destruction of the Jacobite hopes. James was an exile, and his daughter had ascended the vacant throne with the Prince of Orange, now William the Third. It is not necessary to enter here into the want of filial affection which Queen Mary showed, nor can her conduct in the extraordinary circumstances in which she was placed be judged by an ordinary standard. In



many relations of life, as Queen and friend, she was faithful and beloved, and to no one more faithful than to Lady Russell; her sympathy in her sorrow, and her admiration for her husband's noble conduct, are expressed in several letters which have been preserved with many from Lady Russell's own pen.

"Our stay in London must be shorter than I had hoped," Louis said. "His Majesty thinks his presence desirable at the Hague, and I am commanded to be in readiness to attend him, with others of his suite, in a few days."

"It would be well if his Majesty were oftener in this country," Lady Russell said. "He does not appear as much as is desired at Whitehall, and I hear that his manner is too cold and reserved to win affection. It is to be hoped his Majesty will not make a long absence."

"It is probable he will return in November," Louis said. "There are many who agree with your ladyship in wishing his Majesty would unbend more to his subjects, at the Hague, as well as in England. I am commanded by her Majesty to say she will see you, Faith, at noon to-morrow. She is very gracious, and will win your favour when I tell you she asked how fares the boy with the face of an angel."

Faith's eyes were alight with maternal pride as Louis added:

"My Lord Galway was so condescending as to say that he was glad to claim kinship with such a boy so described by her Majesty, and was further pleased when



he heard he was named after the Ruvigny's estate of Rayneval, and I told him his mother would always shorten it into Ray, and call him her 'Ray of light.'"

"Ah, Louis, you are laughing at me; and had you no good word for our Clémence?"

"Nay, I leave her to you, forsooth, as you are pleased to say she reflects me in everything. So if what you say is true, to praise her would be to praise myself."

When Louis and Faith left Southampton House, after they had dined with Lady Russell, Faith said:

"I would fain pay a visit to St. Paul's Churchyard and look at my old home. Edward Branstone long ago consoled himself for my loss, and I would fain look out of that window from whence I first saw you!"

"Your nature is full of romance, sweet wife; for my part, I have no desire to call up old scenes. The present is so full of happiness I do not care to go back to the past."

"Ah, I see," Faith said, laughing, "you would fain forget the goldsmith's daughter, and remember only that she is the wife of Monsieur Louis de Massué; thus it may be as well that I enter the shop alone."

"Yes, it may be better," Louis replied; "I might show my dislike for your worthy cousin, and so provoke your displeasure thereby. See, I will leave you at the door and wait for you on the steps before St. Paul's Church, when I have examined the interior."

Faith assented to this proposal and entered the shop, so familiar to her in days long ago, with some hesitation.



Faith was now in the full bloom of womanhood, and was richly dressed, as befitted a lady in her position about the court at the Hague.

Edward Branstone was turning over some necklets in one of the cases, and rebuking a young apprentice who stood near, in a rasping voice, for some neglect of duty. He was so engaged with examining the condition of a pendant attached to the necklet which had not been properly burnished with the leather which the apprentice had in his hand, that he did not at first see Faith. When his attention was directed to her by the man at his elbow, he advanced toward the lady, who he hoped would be a profitable customer, with something as near akin to a bow as his stiff back would allow him to make. He did not recognise Faith till she spoke; holding out her hand to him, she said:

"I came to see my old home, Edward, after many years, and to bring you tidings of my father."

Edward Branstone was himself now.

"I need no tidings brought by you of my uncle; we are in frequent communication on business matters!"

"Esther is well, and good and dutiful to my father; surely, Edward, you are glad to know this?"

"I hope she has sought repentance with tears, and by mercy has found it," was the reply in a cold unemotional voice.

"I would fain see the chamber above, Edward, if you will suffer me to do so."

"To what end?" was the question, in the same cold voice. "Methinks no very pleasant memories are connected with that chamber."



"It is scarce courteous to refuse me my request," Faith said; "but if you persist, I must e'en depart. Surely, Edward, it is time to bury old grievances; and I come hither, in all good-will and kindness."

But Edward Branstone did not soften; he remained standing bolt upright, having at the beginning of the interview waved his hand to his apprentice to depart to the room beyond. Faith, finding her kinsman implacable, was turning to leave the shop, when a brisk little woman came in with a basket on her arm, evidently filled with purchases she had made; her voice was sharp and ringing, as she asked:

"Has this gentlewoman been served, Edward?"

"That is no concern of thine, Martha; let her pass."

"Are you Edward Branstone's wife?" Faith asked; "if so, methinks you will suffer me to see the chamber above, which is dear to me, for I spent much of my girlhood there!"

"You are welcome, doubtless," the little woman said; "come upstairs at once, and rest and be refreshed. Nay, Edward, how can you be so morose to this lady. Here!" she called to a servant who now appeared to take the basket, "hasten to prepare a cup of sack. You may frown as you please, Edward; I am mistress in the house, if you are master in the shop."

It became evident that Edward Branstone had met his match, and that his wife had the upper hand of him.

She tripped upstairs, bidding Faith follow her, and turning as she entered the room, she said:

"To think of Edward being uncivil to you,—you



who look like a grand lady. Well, for my part, I do not covet fine clothes for myself, but I like to see them worn by other folk. I married Edward a year ago, for I wanted a home, and he is a good husband. I keep him in order," she said, laughing, "and in time he'll improve. Those frowns and that stiff way are the worst of him, and we jog along very well. I was brought up by strict parents and made to conform to their wishes, and I am happy enough, and when a woman is near forty she can't pick and choose. It is different for such as you, who are young and fair. Tell me your name."

"I am Faith de Massué. Surely you have heard of me as Faith Jenkins?"

Martha Branstone seemed struck dumb with astonishment.

"Yes," she said, "I heard you were a—well, a disobedient daughter, who led Edward's sister into mischief, and broke your father's heart, and—well-a-day! I don't believe a word of it now I have seen you. Now I'll go and hurry the posset and cakes, for you must break bread in our house before you leave it. Sit down and rest while I go to the buttery."

So, like one in a dream, Faith went to the bay window overlooking the Churchyard, and leaning on the stone mullions, gazed down on the familiar scene below. All the past rose before her. Louis's first glance up at that very window, all that followed, his illness, his departure, the separation which seemed likely to be lasting. "Oh how happy I am," she thought, as she saw Louis's tall figure below, now moving with the



stately pace of ripened manhood, "how happy with him and the children, reconciled to my father, blessed with all that a woman's heart can desire. How can I thank God enough for all his goodness to me?"

Martha Branstone soon returned, and, unwilling to disappoint her, Faith ate the biscuit and drank from the old grace cup, which she recognised as that her father handed round to his guests in past days.

"You are very kind and good to me," Faith said, when she had finished. "I must go now, for my husband awaits me, and may be impatient."

"Let him bide your time," Martha said; "men, even the best, must not be humoured. I act on this principle, and it answers with a man like Edward. Well, if you must go, I'll say farewell, and I should like to kiss you first."

Then Faith bent and kissed the face upturned to hers. It was a plain face as to features, but shone with intelligence, and was mobile in its expression.

"Good-bye," Faith said. "I shall not forget you, and I hope you will be happy."

"Oh yes, happy enough, but we don't come into the world to be happy. I have a good home and plenty, and for the rest, there are thorns everywhere, and I find amusement out of mine. I laugh when Edward frowns, and pull his coat when he is holding forth at the meeting too long. Oh, I am the right wife for him, and there's an end of it."

As Faith passed through the shop she paused at the counter, and, turning to Edward, she said:



"Your wife has been very good to me, Edward, and I hope you will part with me as a friend."

Again the fair white hand was stretched out, and a long bony one took it for a moment in a loose grasp. But there was no kindly pressure, and Edward said:

"You have chosen the service of the world, Faith; may you know the converting grace of the Lord, and so I bid you farewell."

Not one muscle of his face relaxed, nor did a softer tone sound in his voice, but when Faith had left the shop, he stood staring out of the window as if spell-bound.

Perhaps some strong emotion was in his heart, of which he had set himself to resist any outward sign. But Edward Branstone, wrapped in the mantle of his own inordinate self-appreciation, was not the man likely to forgive or forget the fact that Faith had rejected his suit, and had outwitted him by escaping from his house to take refuge at Canterbury with those who protected her from his unwelcome and persistent endeavour to obtain her for his wife.

When Faith rejoined her husband, he said:

"What now, Faith? How have you sped? Not well, methinks, for you look as grave as a judge."

"I am only sorry," she said, gently. "I would fain have parted from Edward as a friend, but he was cold and unkind and even rude."

"What else could you expect? Do not tell me more about his boorish conduct, or I shall not be able to resist my long pent-up desire to give him a good thrashing, the scoundrel!"



"Nay, Louis, do not cherish ill-will;" then she added brightly, and resuming her accustomed manner: "He has got the right wife, who will never be his slave, and she is a little woman with a fine spirit. I laugh when I think of her account of pulling Edward's coat when he preaches too long; so all is for the best."

"Who doubts it?" Louis replied, "and as I have also got the right wife, who would never be any man's slave, I need not concern myself about the canting Puritan. Let us forget he ever existed. Will that satisfy you, sweet wife?"

"Yes," she said gently; "but let us forgive as well as forget, Louis."

They now returned to Southampton House, Lady Russell having insisted that as of old they should make their home there while in London.

"Our time is very short," Louis said, when he left Faith in the hall, "and I may be called to return to the Hague any day; so hold yourself in readiness, and do not forget you are to pay your respects to her Majesty at Whitehall to-morrow."

With her wonted thoughtfulness for every one about her, Lady Russell had despatched a messenger at once to Stratton to tell Richard and Clarice of the arrival of Louis and Faith, and to ask them to make arrangements to come to London as soon as possible. So, on the third day after the arrival of Louis de Massué and his wife, one of the roomy coaches from Stratton rolled up to the door of Southampton House, and Clarice springing out, ran with her light swift step up the wide



staircase, and passing the servant who stood there did not wait to be announced, but hastily entered the large room where she hoped to find Faith.

"Your pardon, dear lady," she exclaimed, as Lady Russell turned round from the table where she was sitting. "Do not think I take too much freedom, but I am all anxiety to see my brother and Faith."

"Ever the same Clarice," Lady Russell said, with a smile, "full of life and spirit! Yes, doubtless, I pardon your sudden entrance which roused me from sad meditation. Ah, Richard!" Lady Russell said, as Richard advanced, and kneeling, took Lady Russell's hand and kissed it respectfully.

"It was good and kind to send for us, dear lady," Clarice said, "but I would fain welcome Faith to our happy home which you have provided for us."

"There is but scant time for any extra journey," Lady Russell said. "Louis may be ordered to return to the Hague at any moment, and my young kinsman and his wife are continually in attendance at Whitehall."

"Faith is quite the great lady now," Clarice said. "I shall have to make her a deep curtsey, and mind, Richard, you do your *devoirs* as you ought. We must not forget *les bonnes façons*, though we live amongst rustics as *pauvre petite maman* was wont to say. I have continually to call Richard to order, and not let him become too much of a rustic, dear madam."

"And I have to call you to order," Richard said, laughing, "for rushing up the stairs like a hare to cover. My lady's servants stared at you with wonder."



"I will make amends later and be very sedate, but how I wish these grand folk, our brother and sister, would arrive."

"They will return for supper," Lady Russell said; "and now I will ask Richard to see that Taunton orders your baggage to be taken up to the rooms adjoining those where Louis and Faith are established. The old nurseries," Lady Russell said, "whence the children have departed, the eldest of them has a nursery of her own now."

Then Lady Russell was silent, and Clarice heard a long, low sigh, which made her kneel by her best friend, and take her hand with a loving pressure. Lady Russell soon roused herself, and asked questions about Stratton, tidings of every person on the estate, of the health of Podgers the steward, and of every member of the household by name.

"Richard has brought with him a great quantity of home produce," Clarice said, "and it is good to think all things prosper under his management, both in the field, the orchard, the garden, the stables and the poultry-yard. You divined rightly, dear lady. Richard was cut out for a country life and not for dull law, and he makes many friends in the neighbourhood."

"Good and trusty friends, I hope?"

"Yes," Clarice said, "for the most part, dear lady, I always feel the spirit of my lost sister is near us. I took Richard as her legacy, and I strive to do for him what she would have done. I think I have succeeded."

"Yes, dear Clarice, you have succeeded. God grant



your happy home may not know the shadow of dark clouds for many a day."

"It is all sunshine and brightness, except for one thing. I long for a child to name Clémence, and to be like her. This is a gift denied me; it may be I am not worthy to possess it. Faith has that treasure, and sometimes I ask why am I denied it? why is Richard denied it?"

"The gift may yet be bestowed," Lady Russell said, gazing down into Clarice's fair face, on which time had left scarcely a trace, so fresh and young she looked. "But whether or no, dear Clarice, do not torment yourself with whys and wherefores, but accept the rich blessing you possess in a husband's love, and be content."

"He does love and reverence me, I know," Clarice said; "and we both love the memory of that gentle one whose place I am unworthy to fill. Does Faith bring good news of my mother?"

"Yes, it seems that she is fairly contented, and that Esther Branstone pays her and your good uncle the devotion of a daughter."

"Esther! that little wild creature! it is strange to hear of her as devoted and useful. It is well, I know, my mother departed to the Hague with Abigail. I might have lost patience at times, and Richard—well, married folk are best left to each other, especially when, as in our case, one has a hot temper and the other likes his own way. Yes, though I would fain see our mother once again, I am well satisfied that she consented to go to the long lost brother, the quest for whom brought



us to England, strangers in a strange land, where we were made happy by the kindness and the benefits showered on us by one who has ever since been our best and truest friend."

Clarice spoke with much earnestness, but tears dimmed her bright eyes, and Lady Russell, bending over her, said:

"Well has that kindness been repaid, dear child; my kindred from France are bound to me by closer ties than that of mere relationship. Can I ever forget that they were with me in the darkest hour of my life, and that they loved and honoured him who, though hidden from my sight, remains ever near me in spirit, till, by God's mercy, I meet him again."

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## CHAPTER XVI.

## AT LAMBETH.

SEPTEMBER, 1694. The golden sunshine of September was illuminating the time-honoured walls of Lambeth House with splendour. The pinnacles and buttresses of that stately pile stood out against a blue sky which was reflected in the river flowing at flood tide below the walls.

The Archbishop had just landed from his barge at the stairs opposite Morton's Gateway, which is a fine specimen of the early Tudor style of brick building. The Archbishop was attended by his servants, and leaned somewhat heavily on the arm of his chaplain.

"Your Grace should rest to-day after this exertion," the chaplain, Dr. Ralph Parker, said. "Let us leave all further business till the morrow."

"I will take some repose," was the answer, "but I cannot look forward to so many morrows, that I should put off what should be done to-day."

The Archbishop had been to Whitehall to take leave of the King, who was about to return to the Hague, and apparently his visit had not tended to raise his spirits. The Archbishop knew well enough that the King's preference for his Dutch people was becoming more and more commented on by the English, who had



elected him to fill the vacant throne. The trusted friend and servant of William and Mary, he had ventured to speak plainly to the King, and beg him to hasten to return to England, and allow himself to be seen more frequently amongst his subjects than had hitherto been his custom. It was always difficult to be sure whether William took what was said in good part, or whether he was displeased with it. And it was this uncertainty which was weighing now upon the Archbishop's mind as he passed under the gateway of his palace, and walked slowly through the great hall, which was so full of memories—some sad memories of those who had gone before him.

How many had passed from their trial under that vaulted roof to the barge awaiting them to bear them on the silent highway to their dungeons in the Tower to meet their doom on the scaffold! Sir Thomas More, the noble-minded Chancellor, and Fisher, the aged Bishop of Rochester, had been arraigned here and condemned, because they steadfastly refused to take the oath craftily framed, which would have compromised their consciences and regained the fitful favour of King Henry the Eighth.

The oak roof of the great hall of Lambeth House, as Tillotson used to call it—never Lambeth Palace—seems to tell of Plantagenet days. The old hall had, indeed, been ruthlessly demolished in the time of the great rebellion, and its materials actually sold by auction, but Archbishop Juxon, in rebuilding it, retained as much as possible its medieval character. The great hall stood in 1694 as now—two hundred years later—a memorial



of his generosity and reverent care to restore to his country this stately palace so rich in memories and so full of historical interest. In Archbishop Tillotson's days, the hall was used chiefly as a thoroughfare to the private apartments, but as he paced slowly through it on this September afternoon his thoughts went back to the past, where the thoughts of the old are always wont to dwell.

Perhaps his late interview with the king had revived many of the associations connected with it, and brought before him more vividly than usual the ever-shifting tide of human affairs. Archbishop Juxon had stood beside King Charles on the scaffold, and his name was so intimately associated with that of his royal master, that the thought of it seemed to call up memories of the changes and chances of the last forty-five years. When the king was beheaded and the throne overturned, Dr. Tillotson was a young man of scarcely twenty years old. He could recall the early days of the Protectorate, ending with the death of that rugged giant who had for a few short years held an iron sway over the destiny of the nation. Then came the reaction, when the great tide of loyalty rushed over the country, to ebb again when the restored monarch disappointed their expectations, and, as in the merciless death of Lord Russell, and other acts of oppression, threatened to take from the people that freedom of thought and action, for which many were ready to die. The short-lived reign of James did but make the weight of tyranny more oppressive, and, ending as it did in ignoble flight—when his wife and child, crouching under



shelter near this very spot, embarked on the dark waters of the Thames on a winter's night to take refuge in France—opened the way for William and Mary to ascend the throne.

Then—and this was to-day uppermost in the Archbishop's thoughts—came the struggle of which many good men knew the bitterness, between opposing views of what was the right course for Churchmen to pursue, whether to swear allegiance to the new sovereign, or refuse to do so. The diversity of opinion on this subject had separated many close friends. Bishops and clergy were divided into jurors and non-jurors, and in the rank of the former, Tillotson took his stand, while the latter were headed by Archbishop Sancroft. Though Tillotson had sought to dissuade Lord Russell from countenancing designs for the overthrow of the Government, he had boldly declared, in answer to the King's demand, that he could imagine circumstances in which resistance to the Crown would be lawful. The Duke of York had sought to press him further, but Charles had silenced him, saying: "Let him be, brother, the doctor has answered like an honest man." Thus, when the tyranny of James had become intolerable, Tillotson, consistently with his declaration of five years before, was ready to take the oath to William. He long resisted, however, the new King's wish to nominate him for the archbishopric, and not until the third year after the Revolution did he accept the Primacy of which Sancroft had been deprived.

It would be vain to tell here how much was suffered in those days of anxious debate by men on both



sides. And as the Archbishop, reaching his private library, sank wearily into his chair, he sighed heavily. "Serene and sweet" as was his temper, the many false accusations brought against him were hard to bear patiently, and the disapproval of those whom he had loved and respected often gave rise to sad reflections. The mitre which he had never desired was but a poor compensation for the loss of what no man valued more highly—the loss of the affection of his early friends, his brethren on the bench of bishops, and many others.

The Archbishop had not been long alone, when a gentle tap was heard at the door, and his wife came in, with some hesitation, as if afraid of disturbing him. She was a tall and slender woman, whose face bore the mark of many sorrows, which the loss of both her daughters had left on it. Mrs. Tillotson was the first wife who had shared the cares of Lambeth since Archbishop Parker's time, nearly two centuries before. Queen Elizabeth never could bring herself to approve of the marriage of the clergy. Once on taking leave of the Archbishop, after a visit to Lambeth, she made this characteristic speech to Mrs. Parker: "*Madam*, I may not call you; *Mistress*, I am loth to call you, but whoever you are, I thank you for your good cheer!"

"Dear husband," Mrs. Tillotson said, "the time we spent in the country will not avail to establish our health if we return too eagerly to business. Put aside those papers and come with me into my own apartment, prepared by your kindness for me, and where there is more sunshine than here."

"Nay, dear wife, I must needs finish the docketing



of that pile," he said, pointing to a large bundle of letters. "I may be wrong, but I have a foreboding that time is short for me."

"And for us all," Mrs. Tillotson said hastily. "Nay, I am likely to be the first to go."

"I trust not; bereft of our sweet children I could ill spare you, dear heart."

"And could I spare you better?" was the reply. "Nay, surely not."

"Well, well, let us leave it in God's hands." Then, with a reassuring smile the Archbishop said: "You look curiously at yonder pile of papers. Was there ever a woman who was not curious?"

"Nay, if I have not your confidence," Mrs. Tillotson said, "I will not force it. I trust you have all your sermons in order; let none escape, for they will live after you."

The Archbishop smiled again.

"A short life, methinks, for sermons written are never like sermons spoken. I know, and I thank God, many thirsty souls have flocked to hear me, but I doubt much if there would be many to read me. I am putting my house in order, for as I said the time is short, and I will not forget to make arrangement for the disposal of those of my sermons never before published, and, I trust, for your benefit hereafter, dear wife."

Mrs. Tillotson watched the Archbishop as he dipped a quill in the ink, and, drawing towards him a sheet of paper, said with a smile:

"Curiosity shall be gratified, dear wife. You shall read what I write on this paper, which I shall fasten



securely round yonder pile, and then consign it to the strong chest where all important private matters will be found at my death. I would that there was a better competency for you, as my widow, but I have confidence in the friendly offices of my chaplain, good and true-hearted Parker, that he will advise you for the best. Our son-in-law, Chadwick, will also be as a son should be to the mother of his well-beloved wife."

"Indeed, Joseph," Mrs. Tillotson exclaimed, trembling on the brink of tears, "I cannot brook any more of these forebodings. Feeble in health as I am, I say I shall go hence before you; it is unkind to grieve me thus."

"Nay, dear heart, I would not grieve you. But we do not escape death by refusing to look at it steadily. Often in lonely moments I think of my dear Lord Russell's calmness when death drew nigh, and I feel humbled when I find myself desiring life and to see more good days. Let us say no more thereon now."

Then the Archbishop took the quill and again dipped it in the ink, writing these words:

*"These are libels; I pray God forgive them—I do."*

His wife read the words with tear-dimmed eyes, saying, "This is like thy noble self, dear Joseph."

The Archbishop proceeded to sprinkle the words with sand to dry the ink, and then he took the papers in his hand, fastened them carefully with this inscription on the outer cover, and rising, opened an iron chest, and depositing them within it, he turned the key in a padlock, and said:

"Now we will dismiss the matter, and I will resort



with you to your pretty chamber, dear heart, and you shall give me a cup of wine, for it wants yet two hours to supper."

As the Archbishop and his wife were passing together along a corridor which led to Mrs. Tillotson's private apartment, there was a sound of voices in the large hall, and a servant came to announce that my Lady Russell and Monsieur and Madame de Massué with Master and Mistress Cheeke had arrived in a barge, and desired an audience with his Grace.

"Admit them at once," the Archbishop said; "and let the supper be hastened and the board well spread—but wait! I will myself receive my lady and bring her hither."

Mrs. Tillotson would have remonstrated, but the Archbishop said:

"Nay, I may not often again have the honour of a visit from her ladyship. I will bid the rest of the party repair to your room, dear wife, whither do you go and await their coming."

Then, evidently with an effort, the Archbishop threw off all signs of fatigue and followed the servant to the Great Hall to welcome his guests. They soon appeared, Lady Russell approaching with somewhat slow and careful steps, leaning on Louis de Massué's arm, Clarice and Faith following with Richard Cheeke. The Archbishop greeted Lady Russell with a respectful bow.

"Welcome, dear lady, thrice welcome, and I rejoice that you are able to undertake this visit."

"Guided by our good friend, Louis," was the reply, "my eyes serve me well enough to look into your



kindly face, my dear friend. I would that I could see there less signs of too much fatigue and anxious service. Your Grace must rest from your labours and recover strength."

The Archbishop smiled, and turning to Louis, said:

"Permit me now to conduct my lady to Mrs. Tillotson's apartment, where she anxiously awaits her arrival." Then pausing, he added: "And welcome to you, dear ladies, also. Mistress Cheeke has all the brightness of youth in her face; and it wears the same aspect as when we met in the parlour of the Chequers Inn at Canterbury. You can call that day to remembrance, dear young lady?"

"Indeed I can, my lord. Your kindness can never pass out of my memory."

"Nor out of mine either, my lord," Faith said. "We all owe you much."

"And you repay me—if indeed there was a debt at all—by seeing you so happy with your good husbands. Master Richard Cheeke ever bore the cares of life lightly, and he looks now as if he had none to bear, methinks."

"A divided burden, my lord, if there be any," Richard said, laughing; "and forsooth it is not a heavy one. I am not weighed down by the affairs of state, like our good Louis. Our country life, provided for us by my lady's goodness, suits us well."

"It has its duties, as all lives, whether in town or country, ever must have," the Archbishop said, as he turned away to lead Lady Russell through the Hall to the private apartments where Mrs. Tillotson was ex-



pecting her. The Archbishop paused at the door of the Hall to say: "You young folk may perchance like to take a turn in the pleasaunce and join us later at supper."

Faith understood that the Archbishop would prefer a private interview with Lady Russell, and putting her hand into Clarice's arm, she said:

"Yes, let us explore the wonders of this grand house, where I have never been till now. But how greatly the Archbishop is changed since the Canterbury days. He looks an old man, and burdened with the weight of years."

"Not of years so much," Louis said, "as of strife and contention, which cast their shadow over him. He has had much to bear from the bitterness of enemies and the divisions amongst his friends. But come with me, Faith and Clarice, and I will act as your guide to the Chapel, the Guard-room, and the Lollard's Tower."

Supper was spread at an earlier hour than usual, as Lady Russell feared to be on the river long after sunset. The Archbishop was always a genial host, and the conversation was bright and cheerful, and every guest felt at ease in his presence.

The barge used by the Bedford family awaited them at the landing-place, known from very early times as the Water Tower. It was always here that the Archbishops took their barges, and could pass out in comparative privacy on errands of business or pleasure to Westminster or London. The Archbishop accompanied his guests to the stairs, and handed Lady Russell carefully into the barge. He had a kind word at parting

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for each one as they passed on, to seat themselves by Lady Russell's side. A few words were spoken to Clarice in a tone too low to reach other ears, and brought the colour to her cheeks, and the tears to her bright eyes.

"I rejoice to see you have accepted the legacy left you by your sainted sister, who lives with my own dear children in my memory. See to it, dear Mistress Clarice, that you kindle ever in your husband's heart the love of all that is pure and of good report."

Then when all was ready, the Archbishop raised his hand, and said in his resonant voice:

"May the Lord bless you all, and have you in His holy keeping, now and for evermore."

Then the barge was unloosed from its mooring, and slowly passed down the river where the sunset glory still lingered. The Archbishop watched it till it was out of sight, and then taking the arm of his chaplain, returned to the Palace and to rest.

And as the barge passed from Dr. Tillotson's wistful gaze, with those whose life-story has been told in this book, so must they too pass from our sight, down that ever-flowing river of time, which loses itself in the shoreless ocean where time shall be no longer. The generations of men come and go, and we may say with the poet—

"Take them, O great Eternity!  
Our little life is but the gust  
That bends the branches of the tree,  
And trails its blossoms in the dust."

But whether we look at the history of bygone ages, or



the history of our own time, which is daily rehearsed before our eyes, we may take courage, as we think of examples of noble endurance—of womanly faith and purity unstained—of manly steadfastness and persistence in the right path, in the face of difficulty and in the near prospect of death. Such lives speak to us from the past, and shine forth in the darkness as the beacon-lights of hope, to encourage us who are yet, it may be, in the thick of the conflict of this unstable and perilous life. Such examples seem to preach the old, old lesson it is sometimes hard to learn, that it is not by what we *say* that we too can make our light shine; rather that by a faithful continuance in the way of truth, we may come out of the furnace of trial, as did Rachel Lady Russell, refined and purified, and meet for the Master's service.

THE END.



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